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"IN THE TOILS" OR "ONWARD FOR ZION": IMAGES OF

THE MORMON WOMAN, 1852-1890

by

Gail Farr Casterline

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

History

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

1974

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Gail Farr Casterline

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ABSTRACT

"In the Toils" or "Onward for Zion": Images of
the Mormon Woman, 1852-1890

by

Gail Farr Casterline, Master of Arts

Utah State University, 1974

Major Professor: Dr. Charles S. Peterson
Department: History

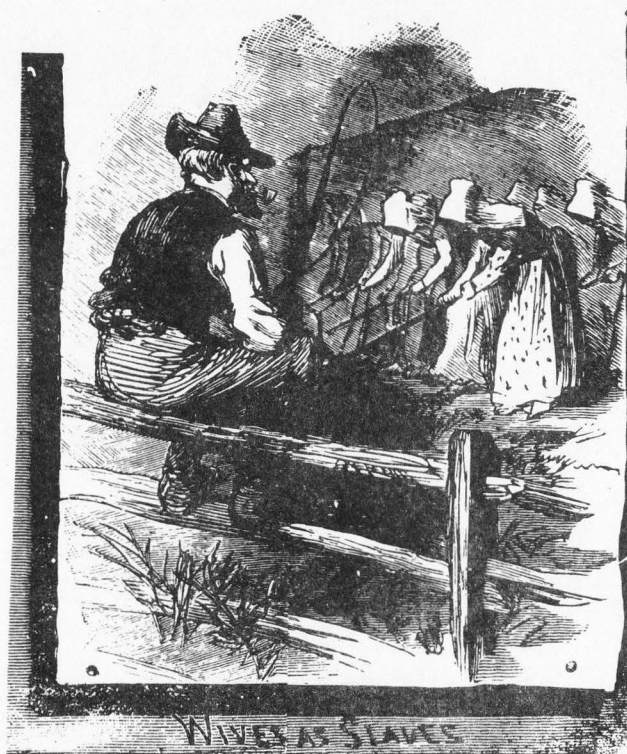
The purpose of this thesis is to identify and discuss various popular images of the Mormon women of Utah between 1852 and 1890, the period during which the Latter-day Saints openly practiced plural marriage. The phrase "in the toils" refers to the basic image present in the minds of many Americans--that the women of the church were an oppressed, unhappy, enslaved group of individuals. This image, expressed in different ways, is found in many published writings of the period examined.

After demonstrating the presence of this "in the toils" image, this study then attempts to analyze and evaluate its significance. Certainly this negative image had a bearing on anti-Mormon sentiment in general and opposition to the practice of polygamy. Moreover, the image seemed to generate more from nineteenth century values toward women and the family than it did from observable realities of the Mormon woman's condition. Several more realistic and historically valid images of the nineteenth century Mormon woman are suggested here. Another aspect of this subject is the manner in which the Mormon women themselves responded

to their misrepresentation among non-Mormons. They identified themselves with an image of moving "onward for Zion," many of them, at least publicly, wholeheartedly endorsing their church and its teaching concerning plurality of wives.

This paper has been based on numerous types of primary sources published between 1852 and 1890, including periodical articles, novels, reformers' tracts, travel accounts, newspapers, and public documents. The Mormon perspective has been studied through sermons, public testimonials of Mormon women, the Woman's Exponent, and a number of secondary sources.

(165 pages)



"I had expected to see men with long whips, sitting on fences, swearing at their gangs of wives at work in the fields."

--Phil Robinson
British traveler to Utah, 1882

Figure 1. From The Mysteries of Mormonism (1881).*

*Photo courtesy of Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah.

INTRODUCTION

When authoress Cornelia Paddock chose to entitle her book on the Mormon women of Utah In the Toils; or, Martyrs of the Latter Days (1879), she captured in a single phrase a good deal of the contemporary American feeling toward the subject of her discussion. "Toil" as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary means in the general sense severe labor taxing one's mortal being or an unpleasant condition of turmoil and confusion, with the saying "in the toils" indicating a state of physical or emotional hardship and strain. Tracing the phrase to its medieval roots, a toil was a device used to ensnare game during the hunt; in terms of this allusion, "in the toils" denotes a condition of being trapped and held captive. In all its shades of meaning, "in the toils" summarized what many people believed to be the true circumstances of Mormon womanhood, or, more specifically, what woman's life was like in a society where men married several wives. The following is a study of observers' perceptions of the condition of the women of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints during the period in which their plural marriage was openly acknowledged and practiced. It is also a partial study of some of the actual conditions and attitudes characterizing the lives of the Mormon women themselves. As will be shown, the non-Mormon, or Gentile, and the Mormon perspectives were often widely separated and both historically significant in distinctive ways.

Few people actually knew very much about the Latter-day Saints in the nineteenth century. They were geographically remote, and in an era

of slow communication, contemporaries had little source of information other than hearsay or the observations and opinions of those who had been to Utah. Into this informational vacuum stepped the mechanisms of "image." Image is usually based on a few facts, but it is derived more from curiosity, imagination, and values based on past experience. The outside world had a negative image of Mormon polygamy, stemming from inaccurate information about the practice and its conflict with current domestic values. There was also a fairly consistent image of the Mormon woman, that she was degraded and oppressed by her culture's unusual form of marriage. The Gentile view of the Mormon women is important as it gives insight into the preoccupations of the predominant culture, such as values surrounding women's home roles and concern over the changing status of women. Another important feature of the Gentile view is its relationship to the larger theme of anti-Mormonism in nineteenth century America, for it was undoubtedly a contributing element.

It hardly needs to be argued that the Gentile view of Mormon women was faulty and exaggerated on many points; more striking is the extent to which it was incomplete. Plural marriage was only one component of a larger religious and social framework, and its impact upon the women could not be easily or quickly assessed. An examination of historical evidence indicates that the nineteenth century Mormon women actually were unique and special, but for few of the same reasons brought out by their popular stereotype. A detailed analysis of their true condition is not within the scope of this paper's discussion. However, an effort has been made to suggest several more accurate and valid images of Mormon womanhood, any of which would have conveyed a more complete picture of their situation than "in the toils."

Moreover, the women of Mormonism had a distinct image of themselves. They thought of themselves as moving "onward for Zion"; they identified with their church's teachings to the extent that their self-image consisted of such themes as intense religious faith and sense of mission. They claimed, at least publicly, that their position in Mormonism had as many positive features as their observers thought it had negative. The two conflicting images--"in the toils" and "onward for Zion"--were not reconciled during the period before 1890. They could not be, as long as polygamy continued to be a heated issue. Despite persistent efforts, the Mormon spokeswomen were not able to make the practice less distasteful or objectionable or change the widely-held assumption that they were helpless victims of the male priesthood and an immoral practice. Little-recognized in its time among Gentiles was the Mormon sisters' positive association with their own concept of their situation and their articulation of a rationale in defense of plural marriage.

The method of this paper has been to examine a single aspect--discussion of women--appearing in published writings on the Saints between 1852 and 1890. Discussion of the women is found in many types of sources--periodicals, novels, short stories, travel accounts, exposés, reformers' tracts, even Congressional documents--and the image of the oppressed Mormon woman, in varying degrees, appears in each. Since this basic theme transcends classification by genre, something of its widespread nature as a cultural stereotype is apparent. This study has drawn on works of each category in efforts to show the breadth of the image's scope, with emphasis on fairly well-known writings of some circulation in their own time. The process of selecting materials has been eased by

a number of recent comprehensive historical monographs dealing with the nineteenth century image of Mormons and Mormonism as a whole as found in specific types of sources.¹ Through their detailed descriptions, discussions, and bibliographies, these studies have allowed access and exposure to much of the writing and opinion toward the Saints and have enabled selection of sources as fairly representative for the purposes of this paper. It is hoped that this paper will complement these previous studies. While many sources have been personally examined and described here as bearing on the subject, it has not been possible to cite all the literature available.

To give the Mormon perspective, materials such as sermons, scriptural texts, and various secondary sources have been employed. Sources such as Mormon women's diaries and journals have not been used, although it has been possible to derive some picture of the women through their own published works, especially the Woman's Exponent, the newspaper of the church women. The Woman's Exponent is of particular interest as it shows how the women responded to their popular image among the non-Mormon world.

¹Leonard J. Arrington and Jon Haupt, "Intolerable Zion: The Image of Mormonism in Nineteenth Century American Literature," Western Humanities Review, 22 (Summer 1968), 243-60; Arrington and Haupt, "The Missouri and Illinois Mormons in Ante-Bellum Fiction," Dialogue, A Journal of Mormon Thought, V (Spring 1970), 37-50; Richard Olsen Cowan, "Mormonism in National Periodicals (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1961); Neal Lambert, "Saints, Sinners, and Scribes: A Look at the Mormons in Fiction," Utah Historical Quarterly, 36 (Winter 1968), 63-77; Dennis Leo Lythgoe, "The Changing Image of Mormonism in Periodical Literature" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Utah, 1969); Edwina Jo Snow, "Singular Saints: The Image of the Mormons in Book Length Travel Accounts, 1847-1857" (unpublished Master's thesis, The George Washington University, 1972).

It has often been said that to most mid- and late-nineteenth century Americans the terms "Mormonism" and "polygamy" came to be practically synonymous, and both were viewed negatively. The thesis of this paper is in agreement, although it attempts to suggest a corollary interpretation. Many contemporaries who wrote about Mormon plural marriage gave particular, sometimes exclusive emphasis to a single aspect--the negative impact of the practice upon women. By inference it would appear that the words "Mormonism" and "polygamy" also became interchangeable with the concept of womanly abuse and degradation. A study of the popular image of the suffering, mistreated female element of Zion thus gives more precise definition to the anti-Mormon sentiment through focusing on one of its components. The nineteenth century commentary on the Mormon woman's condition forms an interesting sidelight of American social history as it reveals the system of current freedoms and taboos operant in regard to sex roles and domestic mores. As far as the Mormons were concerned, the discussion was of more immediate import as they received the consequences of its implications as embodied in hostile attitudes and restrictive legislation.

This study of images of the Mormon woman discusses five major topics, deals with two basic perspectives, non-Mormon and Mormon, and suggests some realities concerning the Mormon women lying between the conflicting polarities of rhetoric. Chapter I surveys a number of nineteenth century non-Mormon writings to demonstrate a variety of opinion and type of representation. Although non-Mormon writers and observers varied in their approach in discussing the women of the Mormon church, their

commentary itself was often similar to the point that the women were an unhappy, afflicted group "in the toils." Chapter II looks more closely at some of the factors which lay behind the Gentile image, such ideas as how the predominant American culture believed women should be treated and how plural marriage conflicted with popular concepts of romantic monogamous love and a sentimental glorification of womanhood. Chapter III, staying with the basic approach of "image," shows that in fact there was a good deal of observable evidence in nineteenth century Mormon society to support representations of the women other than "in the toils." Any of the alternative representations offered point out the narrowness of "in the toils" as a rendering of true circumstances and come closer to the historical realities of the Mormon woman's condition. Chapter IV discusses the response to Gentile criticism among the Mormon women themselves. The women of the church made their own assertions concerning their condition and aims; they attempted to make themselves more accurately known to the non-Mormon public and developed a countering self-image. Chapter V concludes this study by examining the chronological development and change of the Gentile image between 1852 and 1890.

CHAPTER I
THE NON-MORMON IMAGE OF THE MORMON WOMAN:
SURVEY OF OUTSIDERS' VIEWS, 1852-1890

The nineteenth century Mormon woman of Utah seemed to have been to her contemporaries something akin to an eighth wonder of the world. Many noted writers and world travelers placed Utah on their itineraries in hopes of getting a glimpse of this anomalous being. Fiction-writers always found eager audiences for novels alleged to be personal accounts of woman's life under the polygamous Mormon regime. Politicians and reformers took up her cause in efforts to rescue her from the evils of polygamy. Of course many were curious about the Latter-day Saints' religious and social innovations in general, but the women of the new Zion were of particular interest in connection with the practice of plural marriage. The Gentile view of Mormon women was for the most part that of polygamous women, in its preliminaries a stilted view since many of the women were not plural wives. Nor did the Gentile view give much credibility to the religious beliefs behind plural marriage. Beyond this point, commentators ranged in approach and tone, although it is possible to identify a number of conventional ways in which the women were viewed and represented in works published between 1852 and 1890. This chapter will discuss some of these representations and point out recurring and overlapping features leading to a consensus, or overall non-Mormon "image" of the women.

Objective approach. Rarely were there objective or open-minded representations of the Mormon woman. However, some observers did make an honest attempt to understand her way of life in its broadest sense, and although they ventured their personal opinions they did not rely on hearsay or prejudice for their material. Travelers to Utah such as John Gunnison, Jules Remy, Sarah Wood Kane, Richard Burton, Phil Robinson, and several others wrote accounts of the women that were not marred by bias. These individuals were basically students; they attempted to learn as much as possible, describe, and analyze. Some of these individuals were highly sympathetic and complimentary, but they could also be critical. The remarks of these travelers may be considered historically accurate observations of Mormon society as will be borne out in later chapters. At this point, the objective disposition as found in these sources is distinguished from prevailing views of the women and serves as a reference point for judging their realistic situation.

The open-minded observers found the Mormon women clean, wholesome, pious, chaste, and virtuous in every way. They were excellent housekeepers; though Mormon households might be sparsely furnished, all was neat and well-kept. Englishman Richard Burton, comparing their homes to others in the Far West in 1860, remarked "the only exception to the rule of filth which I have seen are in the abodes of the Mormons."¹ United States Army officer John Gunnison observed in the early 1850's that "all wives in Utah showed a devotion and alacrity in domestic

¹Richard F. Burton, The City of the Saints and Across the Rocky Mountains to California, ed. by Fawn M. Brodie (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), p. 454.

affairs and family duties, that would promote the harmony of the world and make many a heavy heart beat for joy, if universal."² Mrs. Sarah Kane, who visited some of the settlements in southern Utah in 1872, thought Mormonism encouraged women to be as cheerful, industrious, and charitable as did any other religion.³

In appearance, the open-minded observers found Mormon women attractive and neat. Burton thought them noble-looking, with placid expression and slim build.⁴ Solomon Carvalho went to a dance during his stay in Utah in 1854 and said, "a larger collection of fairer and more beautiful women I never saw in one room."⁵ When Mrs. Kane visited a congregation in Nephi, she was charmed by the "old women's sunburned and wrinkled visages, half-hidden in their clean sunbonnets," and "the decent, matronly countenances framed in big old-fashioned bonnets."⁶

The unbiased observers brought out the rustic, agrarian nature of the Mormon woman's life. Englishman William Chandless, among the Mormons in the 1850's, remarked that the walls of the households were covered

² Lieut. J. W. Gunnison, The Mormons, or, Latter-day Saints, in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Company, 1852), p. 120.

³ Sarah Wood Kane, Twelve Mormon Homes Visited in Succession on a Journey through Utah and Arizona (Philadelphia: William Wood, 1874), p. 67.

⁴ Burton, City of Saints, p. 252.

⁵ Solomon Nunes Carvalho, Incidents of Travel and Adventure in the Far West, ed. by Bertram Wallace Korn (Centenary ed.; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1954), p. 223.

⁶ Kane, Twelve Mormon Homes, p. 46.

with spun yarn to be made into cloth.⁷ Burton noted that the women carded, spun, and wove as in rural districts of Britain.⁸ The image of hard-working, simple farm women comes through in the unbiased accounts, while the polygamy aspect was de-emphasized.

Concerning plural marriage, the unbiased observers sought explanations as to the religious justification for the practice and how it operated socially. Individuals such as Remy, Gunnison and Burton wrote lengthy discussions on the subject; they did not rely solely on the cliché of polygamy's oppression of women but made efforts to see the practice from different angles and in a broader context. Nonetheless, as unbiased observers they saw bad as well as good features in the Mormon woman's position and felt that in Utah woman's lot was an ill-favored one. Burton saw distinct economic motives in a man's having several wives, stating "Servants are rare and costly: it is cheaper and more comfortable to marry them."⁹ Mrs. Kane was sensitive to the emotional hardships and loneliness polygamy incurred upon some of the plural wives she met. Gunnison and Remy concluded that the practice was degrading, but not only to women. They found it harmful also to the men and to the whole tenor of relationships between the sexes.¹⁰ Suggestions of women "in the toils" may be found in any of these commentaries, yet

⁷ William Chandless, A Visit to Salt Lake; Being a Journey Across the Plains and a Residence in the Mormon Settlements at Utah (London: Smith, Elder, and Company, 1857), p. 203.

⁸ Burton, City of Saints, p. 355.

⁹ Ibid., p. 481.

¹⁰ Jules Remy and Julius Brenchley, A Journey to Great-Salt-Lake with a Sketch of the History, Religion, and Customs of the Mormons, and an Introduction of the Religious Movement in the United States (2 vols.; London: W. Jeffs, 1861), II, pp. 167-74. Gunnison, The Mormons, pp. 157-61.

always with some remarks as to the women's by-and-large acceptance of the practice. As Gunnison wrote, "to all who consent from a sense of duty or enthusiasm the yoke is easy."¹¹ As a social practice, these observers sometimes found polygamy regrettable; personally they may have even thought it appalling. Yet neither did they find the Mormon women miserably abused or overlook the religious significance the women themselves attached to their status as plural wives.

Depravity view. At the other extreme from these unbiased observations of the women was the "depravity" representation. When one keeps in mind that the Latter-day Saints were one of the most despised sects of nineteenth century America, some of the disdain might be expected to fall upon the women of the church. By far the most slanderous and hateful depiction, the "depravity" view termed the Mormon women prostitutes and concubines, totally lacking all noble and righteous instincts. According to this view, any woman who believed in Mormonism and consented to be a plural wife had to be either insane, mentally deficient, or totally debauched. This representation put the entire Mormon community, men, women, and children alike, in the same low estimation--"modern vermin perpetuating their kind in the disgusting ratio of other loathsome creatures."¹² As Frenchman Jules Remy stated, in Europe it was commonly thought that Mormon wives were "ignorant and half-savages."¹³

¹¹Gunnison, The Mormons, p. 72.

¹²Metta V. (Fuller) Victor, Lives of Female Mormons; A Narrative of Facts Stranger than Fiction (New York: D.W. Evans and Company, 1859), p. xi.

¹³Remy and Brenchley, Journey to Great-Salt-Lake, I, p. 168.

No one gave a less favorable picture of the Mormon woman than Mrs. Benjamin Ferris, who lived in Salt Lake City in the winter of 1852 while her husband served as territorial secretary. The Mormon community as she saw it was one moral cesspool, "an unvarying picture of rascality, folly, imposition, credulity and crime."¹⁴ Mrs. Ferris thought the Mormon women were stupid dolts, willing to "gulp down the most preposterous proposition, merely saying, perhaps, 'Du tell!'"¹⁵ In manner and conversation she found them thoroughly disgusting. A husband's favorite wife was typically a "coarse, blowzy, greasy specimen of womanhood" who delighted in bullying the other wives.¹⁶ Mrs. Ferris was convinced that the Mormon women were prostitutes and adulteresses, which she repeatedly made clear.

Mrs. Ferris's husband also wrote a book about the Mormons that depicted the women as depraved. In this nasty little volume Ferris proclaimed that the Mormon "takes the strumpet to his bosom--wallowing in the filth of the brothel as the grand panacea for the purification of society, and the elevation of himself to the attributes of Deity."¹⁷ As did his wife, Ferris also thought the women were unintelligent and weak-willed dupes exploited by the wily Mormon leaders--"reverend

¹⁴ Mrs. B. G. Ferris, The Mormons at Home; With Some Incidents of Travel from Missouri to California, 1852-53 (New York: Dix and Edwards, 1856), p. 187.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 119.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 146.

¹⁷ Benjamin Ferris, Utah and the Mormons: The History, Government, Doctrines, Customs, and Prospects of the Latter-Day Saints (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1854), p. 242.

panderers, who utter glib and polished falsehoods to entice weak-minded females into their ecclesiastical brothels."¹⁸

The "depravity" view was based on the assumption that polygamy had its roots in licentiousness. This explanation of polygamy was the typical one in periodical articles of the 1850's, in which writers attributed the practice to the lusts of Joseph Smith.¹⁹ It was reflected in novels bearing titles like Apples of Sodom: A Story of Mormon Life (1883).²⁰ The female Saints became "fallen women," concubines used only for sensual purposes. Accordingly, to be in this situation, the Mormon woman had to be both dull-witted and inherently corrupt to so debase her own true instincts. This representation, full of moralistic wrath, treated the Mormon women as objects of scorn. Observers especially condemned the plural wives, some refusing to even apply to them the word "wife." They were, instead, "harlots" or "hussies." A common representation, it appears in a number of works written by non-Mormons between 1852 and 1890.

Harem view. A third attitude toward the Mormon women--the "harem" view--developed through comparison with the status of women in other polygamous cultures. Arriving in Salt Lake City in 1863, New York literary figure Fitz Hugh Ludlow looked in vain for the "brazen"

¹⁸Ibid., p. 241.

¹⁹Richard Olsen Cowan, "Mormonism in National Periodicals" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1961), p. 25.

²⁰[Mrs. Rosetta Luce Gilchrist], Apples of Sodom: A Story of Mormon Life (Cleveland: W. W. Williams, 1883).

sultanas, and Richard Burton expressed surprise at the absence of domes and minarets.²¹ Commentators often referred to Utah as "the American Islam" and Brigham Young as "the Mahomet of the West." A number of contemporaries associated Mormon polygamy with the seclusion of women and unrestricted male sensuality, a barbaric throwback to ancient times. Most appalling of all was that such could occur in a territory of a modern, progressive United States. It was in this reference that the National Republican Party in 1856 paired Negro slavery and Mormon polygamy as "the twin relics of barbarism" and pledged an end to both.

British traveler William Hepworth Dixon expounded at length upon this theme after visiting Utah in the 1860's:

Woman is not in society here at all. The long, blank walls, the embowered cottages, the empty windows, doorways, and verandahs, all suggest to an English eye something of the jealousy, the seclusion, the subordination of a Moslem harem, rather than the gaiety and freedom of a Christian home.²²

As did numerous other visitors, Dixon noted the women's subdued, reticent demeanor, remarking that the women of Utah had lost the art of taking part "even in such light talk as animates a dinner-table and a drawing room."²³ They were reserved and elusive; in the presence of visitors,

... they are brought into the public room as children are with us; they come in for a moment, curtsy and shake hands; then drop out again, as though they felt themselves

²¹ Fitz Hugh Ludlow, The Heart of the Continent: A Record of Travel Across the Plains and in Oregon, with an Examination of the Mormon Principle (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1870), p. 117; Burton, City of Saints, p. 218.

²² William Hepworth Dixon, New America (2 vols.; London: Hurst and Blackett, Publishers, 1867), I, pp. 337-38.

²³ Ibid., p. 338.

in company rather out of place. I have never seen this sort of shyness among grown women, except in a Syrian tent.²⁴

At least one visitor said that the women rarely ventured outside the home and were seldom seen in the city streets.²⁵ Others commented on the cloistering of women and the domineering attitude of the men. According to some observers, most Mormon men believed that a Gentile could have no good intent in addressing a Mormon girl and guarded their wives and daughters with jealousy and suspicion.²⁶ To add to the analogy, some compared a wife's status in Utah to no more than that of a simple commodity; she was merely her husband's property "just as much as his horses, mules, or oxen."²⁷

Famous New York editor Horace Greeley, visiting Salt Lake City in 1859, was extremely critical of what he considered the Mormons' undue restriction of women to the home:

I have not observed a sign in the streets, an advertisement in the journals, of this Mormon metropolis, whereby a woman proposes to do anything whatever. No Mormon has ever cited to me his wife's or any woman's opinion on any subject; no Mormon woman has been introduced or spoken to me; and though I have been asked to visit Mormons in their houses, no one has spoken of his wife (or wives) desiring to see me, or his desiring me to make her (or their) acquaintance, or voluntarily indicated the existence of such a being or beings.²⁸

²⁴ Ibid., p. 339-40.

²⁵ Ludlow, Heart of Continent, p. 332.

²⁶ J. H. Beadle, Life in Utah; or, the Mysteries and Crimes of Mormonism (Philadelphia: National Publishing Company, 1870), p. 378.

²⁷ Mrs. T. B. H. Stenhouse, An Englishwoman in Utah: The Story of a Life's Experience in Mormonism (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1880), p. 146.

²⁸ Horace Greeley, An Overland Journey, ed. by Charles T. Duncan (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), p. 184.

While Greeley did not directly charge that the Mormons were actually barbaric, he certainly suggested that their society had a repressive and undemocratic attitude toward women.

Anti-Mormons constantly played on the idea of the licentious Mormon sultan, although more temperate observers found that polygamy in Utah was practiced in decorum and propriety. Still, the "harem" view held that Mormon women were secluded and made wholly subservient to men by the reinstitution of this ancient custom. Interestingly, Richard Burton, scholar of Near Eastern cultures, found the practice of plural marriage in Utah "far superior to that of the old country," with few similarities to the Islamic harem present.²⁹ For the most part, however, the negative connotations of the harem were often transferred to descriptions of the Mormon woman's condition.

Sensationalized view. A fourth representation of Mormon womanhood was the sensationalized view. While many who wrote about plural marriage brought out its worst aspects, the subject gave rise to a distinct body of novels and short stories in the last half of the nineteenth century. Women loomed large in this field. Most of this literature was written by women authors and was intended for middle class eastern women, a group which by the 1850's constituted an extremely active book-buying market. The popular domestic novel, focusing on the joys and sorrows of a noble female, took on new and bizarre dimensions when transposed to the Mormon setting. Over fifty full-length novels of this type were published

²⁹Burton, City of Saints, p. 482.

before 1900, and numerous other books and dramatic productions dealt with the theme.³⁰

Most of these works were stories specifically about Mormon women, many of them claiming to be authentic first-person accounts. According to these novels, beneath the exterior of an industrious, decorous community of Saints lay a seething hotbed of vice and misery--the farther side of hell. The Mormon woman's life was one long tale of heartbreak and horror, as fiction-writers sought ways to titillate their readers.

The most common prototype of the fictional female Mormon was that of the genteel, true-hearted woman who miraculously escaped the clutches of her oppressors to tell all. Most of these books followed a similar plot line. They began by describing the heroine's conversion to Mormonism in the east, usually a traumatic experience involving separation from or disapproval of close family and friends. Next came the trek across the plains, at which time the heroine usually married a Mormon elder. Finally, the unsuspecting heroine arrived in Utah and either found a host of other wives awaiting her, or her husband soon married another wife. The rest of the story was a bitter saga of domestic strife and disillusionment, but if she was strong and resourceful, the heroine found a way to freedom. If she was not, like the other, usually younger and more innocent, typical female protagonist, she died of a broken heart. In the tradition of the graveyard literature of the early 1800's, novels about the Mormons were strewn with the bodies of delicate, suffering women.

³⁰ Leonard J. Arrington and Jon Haupt, "Intolerable Zion: The Image of Mormonism in Nineteenth Century American Literature," Western Humanities Review, 22 (Summer 1968), p. 244.



OVER AT LAST.

F. S.

Figure 2. From Fanny Stenhouse's An Englishwoman in Utah (1880)*.

Usually the women's predicament was complicated by the cruelty of the men themselves, who were not reluctant to resort to chains, hot irons, and whips to keep recalcitrant wives in tow. The notorious Female Life Among the Mormons (1855) was filled with these kinds of sadistic episodes.³¹ A surprising number of women in these novels were also depicted as cruel. Sometimes a woman would torture her sister-wife or make her a personal slave. Another stock female character in these novels was the diabolical religious fanatic serving as chief assistant and confidante of Joseph Smith or Brigham Young. In Fifteen Years Among the Mormons (1858), Eliza R. Snow, a woman actually revered by the Saints as

³¹ [Maria Ward], Female Life Among the Mormons (1st ed.; New York, 1855).

* Courtesy of Special Collections, Utah State University Library.

spiritualist and poetess, is depicted brandishing a knife at the marriage ceremony to force compliance from unwilling wives-to-be.³²



Figure 3. Fictional Eliza Snow presiding at endowment ceremony in Fifteen Years Among the Mormons.*

The message of these novels could hardly be more explicit, that Mormonism was a terrible crime against the female sex, either crushing or perverting woman's best aspirations. Whether this message was taken

³² Nelson Winch Green, Fifteen Years Among the Mormons: Being the Narrative of Mrs. Ettie V. Smith (New York: Charles Scribner, 1858).

* Courtesy of Special Collections, Utah State University Library.

seriously or not, or to what extent, is difficult to judge, for novels are often read simply for entertainment and vicarious excitement. However, these novelists did develop and familiarize to the public a graphic picture of suffering Mormon womanhood. Moreover, most of these works were written in such a way as to create a true sense of fear among their readers. Eastern women read about and most likely identified with the stories of these innocent, well-meaning feminine converts to Mormonism who in character and background were essentially similar to themselves and their acquaintances. Undoubtedly the novels had the effect of drawing attention to the reality of polygamy, which by implication presented a direct threat to all women of America.

Oppression view. The "depravity" view, the "harem" view, and the sensationalized view of Mormon women were more or less distinct from each other, but all were similar in their insistence that the women of Zion were in a deplorable situation. One all-encompassing view compounded all of these representations and gave them central and vigorous form--namely, the "oppression" view. From all sources examined, the most common Gentile attitude toward the women of the church appears to have been that they were downtrodden victims of male domination and religious delusion. As such, they deserved pity, not scorn.

The "oppression" view rested on the conviction that no woman by her own instincts would consent to become a plural wife. She had somehow been coerced into the situation and was desperately unhappy but lacked the power to free herself from the authoritarian men. Many observers found polygamy in principle degrading and morally wrong; others depicted the women as victims of intentional economic and sexual exploitation.

The Mormon woman's plight was often compared to that of the Negro slave as the abolition of polygamy became one of the major American reform movements of the post-Civil War decades. Similarly, her condition was often described in terms such as "bondage" and "servitude."

Many visitors to Utah claimed that evidence of womanly oppression was everywhere apparent. Polygamy hung "like a terrible pall" upon the women of Zion, whether they had already been "enfolded in its slimy embrace" or whether yet wondering "how soon the spoiler may enter their firesides."³³ Visitors stated that a Mormon woman could be readily identified by her unhappy countenance and dejected bearing, the outward indication of her anguish--her "mark of Cain."³⁴ She had a "weary, repressed look,"³⁵ a "dull, careworn, weary expression."³⁶ She seldom smiled and rarely spoke, but attended to her household duties--usually, waiting on men--in a "strangely quiet way."³⁷ Another mark of the women's oppression was their appearance, for numerous travelers described them as homely. "Female beauty is scarce in Utah"³⁸; the "handsome girls were

³³ Alexander K. McClure, Three Thousand Miles Through the Rocky Mountains (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Company, 1869), p. 159.

³⁴ Mrs. Jennie Froiseth, ed., The Women of Mormonism; or, The Story of Polygamy as Told by the Victims Themselves (2d ed.; Detroit: C. G. G. Paine, 1886), p. 25.

³⁵ John Muir, "The City of the Saints," Letter dated 15 May 1877, printed in San Francisco Evening Bulletin. Reprinted in Steep Trails, ed. by William Frederic Bade (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1918), p. 110.

³⁶ Stenhouse, Englishwoman, p. 315.

³⁷ Beadle, Life in Utah, p. 363.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 249.

few" and "fine-looking women even fewer."³⁹ The Mormon woman's homeliness was another dramatization of her poor existence, polygamy again assumed to be the cause:

With the natural instincts of woman in abeyance, and the help-mate of man degraded into the position of his servant and his plaything, can it be expected that the mind should give glory to the countenance ... ?⁴⁰

Nor did the Mormon women possess "dignity" or "refinement," traits which observers apparently thought possible in monogamous women only.

Nor were women in Utah treated with much respect. According to visitors, in Utah women were taught to defer to the men, even in simple matters of etiquette. Following the oppression theme, William Chandless observed in the 1850's, "most men think anything of a lover-like deference" to women "a humiliation of the superior sex"--which, in Utah, was taken to mean the masculine.⁴¹ Mormon men got first claim on empty chairs in a room; women followed men in entering doorways.⁴² Some visitors noted the crude language the men used in front of the women.⁴³ Even the judicious Mrs. Kane remarked,

³⁹ Samuel Bowles, Across the Continent: A Summer's Journey to the Rocky Mountains, the Mormons, and the Pacific States (Springfield, Mass.: Hurd and Houghton Publishers, 1865), p. 117. For other travelers' comments on the Mormon women's unattractive appearance see Robert G. Athearn, Westward the Briton (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962), p. 36.

⁴⁰ E. P. Hingston, ed., Among the Mormons by Artemus Ward [pseud. Charles Farrar Browne] (London: John Camden Hotten, 1865), p. xxii.

⁴¹ Chandless, Visit to Salt Lake, p. 260.

⁴² Gunnison, The Mormons, p. 157.

⁴³ Chandless, Visit to Salt Lake, p. 241; Gunnison, The Mormons, p. 73.

The temper of the rude men at Santaquin had put me out of temper; my lot of life having previously been cast where such insolence in a lady's presence would not have escaped chastisement.⁴⁴

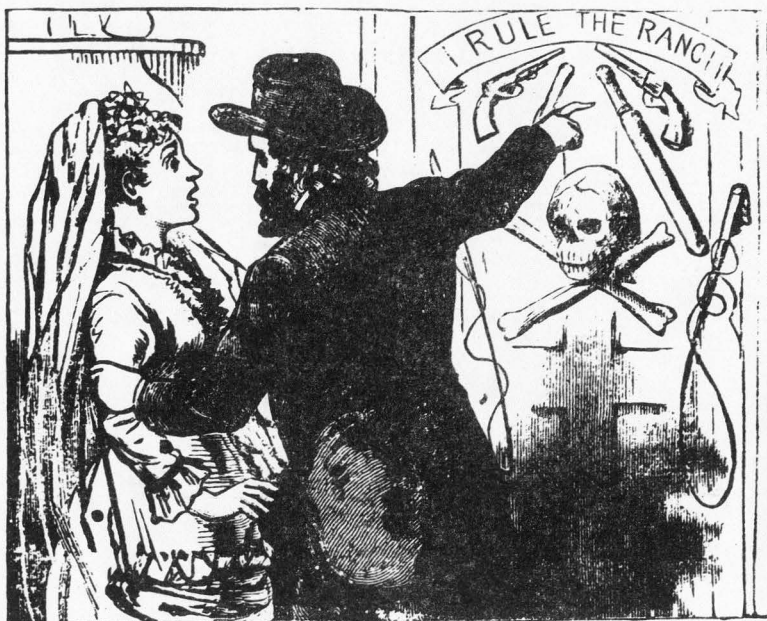
According to most observers, in Mormon society men reigned supreme--in the home, in the church, in the community. Male dominance was further exemplified by the all-male priesthood, which, in theocratic Utah, appeared to govern all phases of community life.

As to the apparent mystery of how any man could support more than one wife, the answer seemed clear enough--the women provided for themselves, their families, and the husband as well. This economic exploitation was one of the more objectionable features of the Mormon woman's "enslavement." As one visitor from the eastern states observed, an astute Mormon, "turning his piety to the good account of getting smart wives, may really board around continually, and live in clover, at no personal expense but his own clothing."⁴⁵ Others noted the practice of men having one wife manage a farm in an outlying district to provide food for himself and the other wives in the city. This arrangement proved to be the last straw for Ann Eliza Young, Brigham Young's wife of his later years. Ann Eliza sought a divorce in 1873, claiming in her best-selling autobiography that she was sent to "The Farm" to produce for her numerous sister-wives at the Bee Hive House, receiving no support whatsoever from the Prophet.⁴⁶

⁴⁴Kane, Twelve Mormon Homes, p. 25.

⁴⁵Bowles, Across Continent, p. 125.

⁴⁶Ann Eliza Young, Wife No. 19, or the Story of a Life in Bondage (Hartford, Connecticut: Dustin, Gilman and Company, 1876), pp. 532-41.



A MORMON: HOME RULER.

Figure 4. The oppressed wife as portrayed in The Mysteries of Mormonism.*

* Courtesy of Utah State Historical Society.

To most observers, however, the worst feature of the Mormon woman's oppression was that of sexual exploitation. Much of the literature on the Mormons focused on the problems of the first wife, who found herself cast aside for a younger, more attractive wife. Many observers had a low opinion of plural wives as home breakers, yet others thought they also deserved sympathy. In the end, it seemed that all wives came to know the same sad fate. Each was replaced by a new wife in the husband's affections, all victims alike of the same oppression.

Reformist view. The belief in the Mormon woman's oppression had to be reconciled with the fact that most of the women were actually basically contented and non-rebellious. The usual explanation was that they had been "brainwashed" or "mesmerized," thus rendered incapable of helping themselves. This argument opened the doors for the widespread anti-polygamy drive of the 1870's and 1880's as reformers claimed Americans had a benevolent duty to assist the helpless women of Zion. The Utah-based Anti-Polygamy Society, established in 1878 by non-Mormon women of the territory, was one of the leading voices in this movement. Its newspaper, the Anti-Polygamy Standard, commenced its first issue by stating that the women were bound to a false theology glorifying plural marriage, so that "some of the most sincerely devout and conscientious have thus been preyed upon."⁴⁷ It was to the tune of the oppressed women of Utah that the reformers played the heartstrings of the nation like a fine violin. The Standard and other materials prepared by reformers contained

⁴⁷ Anti-Polygamy Standard, I (April 1880), p. 1.

many so-called documented cases of polygamy's insidious influences upon women. Frances Willard, president of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, largest woman's organization in late-nineteenth century America, pondered the lot of the Mormon women "with thoughts too deep for tears." She called for direct action "until the Book of Mormon is burned in the fierce blaze of Christian manhood's indignation and woman's righteous wrath."⁴⁸

Such emotionalized rhetoric was typical of the reformist literature. While the theme of womanly abuse was the focal one, other related subjects were treated. Reformers talked about the poor home atmosphere polygamy engendered--the violent quarrels of the wives, the general state of confused relationships, and the lack of proper care and training of children. Truly reformers made Mormon plural marriage appear to be the most pressing social problem of the time.

The emphasis on the woman's suffering condition had the obvious implication of condemning the Mormon men. By the 1870's serious observers began to be more hesitant to chastise the "scarlet women" of Utah; Frances Willard, for example, censured "the harsh criticism made by the uninformed" concerning the women's course "in submitting to this most awful form of tyranny."⁴⁹ Blame was attached more specifically to the men, and it was with the men that anti-polygamists took greatest issue. This trend of opinion was summarized in an article appearing in a Chicago woman's publication in the early 1870's:

⁴⁸ Frances Willard, "Introduction," The Women of Mormonism, ed. by Froiseth, p. xvii.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

"That there are many saintly Mormon 'women' we haven't a doubt. And the men? We believe that Mormonism is a religion (?) invented 'by' and 'for' men--a sort of Juggernaut, in whose path women are expected to lay down their throbbing human hearts."⁵⁰

Humorous view. A noteworthy sidelight of this predominant oppression theme was its entrance into popular humor. A few observers were able to rise above all the horror stories and the moralizing and recognize elements of humor in the Saints' peculiar domestic situations. Artemus Ward and Mark Twain, both visiting Utah in the 1860's, were the most famous of those to satirize the Mormon woman's situation. As satire often involves a play on a stereotype, the historical relevance here seems evident. Even as early as the 1860's, the idea of the downtrodden, homely Mormon wife was enough of a stock representation to allow humorous treatment.⁵¹

Usually the humor hinged on the figure of the many-wived man with innumerable children. Unlike other observers, the humorists expressed less sympathy for the wives than for the Mormon husbands and their problems in heading large and complex households. Mark Twain began his discussion of the Mormons with a parody of the typical travel account, stating

we had no time to make the customary inquisition into the workings of polygamy and get up the usual statistics and

⁵⁰Quoted from The Balance in The Woman's Exponent, II (August 15, 1873), p. 44.

⁵¹Edwina Jo Snow, "Singular Saints: The Image of the Mormons in Book Length Travel Accounts, 1847-1857" (unpublished Master's thesis, The George Washington University, 1972), pp. 152-54.

deductions preparatory to calling the attention of the nation at large once more to the matter.⁵²

He said he was as eager as any of his contemporaries to do a great reform in Utah--until he saw the women. Then he uttered that now-classic comment on the polygamous Mormon woman's condition:

... I was touched. My heart was wiser than my head. It warmed toward these poor, ungainly and pathetically 'homely' creatures, and as I turned to hide the generous moisture in my eyes, I said, 'No--the man that marries one of them has done an act of Christian charity which entitles him to the kindly applause of mankind not their harsh censure--and the man that marries sixty of them has done a deed of open-handed generosity so sublime that the nations should stand uncovered in his presence and worship in silence.'⁵³



I WAS TOUCHED.

Figure 5. From Roughing It.*

Conclusions. Ultimately the humorists were perhaps more liberal than any of their fellow commentators on the Mormons. At least they could appreciate human quirks and differences for what they were, while their contemporaries took the question of Mormon polygamy in earnest indignation. Standing behind all of the arguments against polygamy was that

⁵² Mark Twain [pseud. Samuel Clemens], Roughing It (Hartford, Connecticut: American Publishing Company, 1872), p. 117.

⁵³ Ibid.

* Courtesy of Utah State University Library.

haunting, pathetic figure--woman captive, beleaguered, belabored, befouled--woman "in the toils." It was this image, this perceived representation of reality, which appeared most consistently in writings on the Mormons between 1852 and 1890.

Certainly the presence of this image suggests some important areas of exploration. Any number of those who contributed to the image were capable observers, intellectually equipped to make accurate, independent analyses. It may be asked why so few could see a range of characteristics and a variety of interpretations of the Mormon woman's condition as could, for example, Sarah Kane or Richard Burton, and why most others fixed solely on her degradation in polygamy. The unbiased observers provide indication that the male domination interpretation of Mormon society was often carried much too far. Then, too, misinterpretation of observation entered in. As will be discussed later, nineteenth century Mormon society did encourage a patriarchal, traditional family structure with the husband-father at the head. Contemporaries seemed to confuse this with the extreme social subordination of women as in Islamic cultures. When observers called the women plain and unfashionable, they failed to consider the influences of the frontier environment on personal appearance. And, if the women were suffering victims, most of them seemed oblivious to the fact; they accepted polygamy as a matter of religious belief and asked for no help from the Gentiles. As will become more clear through this study the "in the toils" image was often less a reflection of Mormon womanhood than it was a creation of the non-Mormon mentality, guided by misinformation, misinterpretation, prejudice, and the irrepressible human tendency to judge the new and different in terms of the familiar and accepted.

The following chapters will discuss some of these ideas, with particular attention to some of the origins of the Gentile view of Mormon womanhood and its relationship to realistic conditions among the Saints.

CHAPTER II

THE NON-MORMON IMAGE OF THE MORMON WOMAN:

ANTITHESIS OF AN IDEAL

The exalted ideas respecting women entertained by Americans generally may partly explain their aversion to the Mormons as identified with polygamy.

--James W. Barclay
British traveler to Utah, 1884

Of the numerous factors which contributed to the development of the Gentile view of Mormon womanhood as an oppressed, downtrodden social group, one deserves special attention. If observers perceived the women's position as a negative and inferior one, they must have felt her way of life was not on a par with some more favorable model. The Gentile view may be partly understood by examining some of the current nineteenth century values and ideals attached to the concept of womanhood which formed the observers' frame of reference. Many people found fault with Mormon polygamy because it seemed to place women in a lower situation than prevalent practices allowed and challenged some of their dearest beliefs. In particular, polygamy presented an issue in an era when woman's status was closely tied to the standard of monogamous marriage. This conflict of values partially explains the non-Mormons' extreme adverse reaction to polygamy and their anti-polygamy campaign. Gentile beliefs and fears in a sense became determinant factors in light of the Mormons' inaccessibility and the poor communications of the era.

Typically the mere mention of Mormon polygamy was enough to send many eastern reformers and writers, both male and female, into paroxysms of rage, unknowledgeable though they often were about the realities of the practice.

It is common in our own time to view the position of the nineteenth century American woman as an inferior one; she was denied numerous political, legal, and social rights and access to professional careers. Historians have often tended to focus on the lives and efforts of the women who recognized and challenged these inequalities, emphasizing the themes of "emancipation" and "liberation."¹ This emphasis has perhaps engendered a distorted view of the negative features of the nineteenth century woman's lot; it is important to note that the early radical feminists had relatively little impact in changing their overall social milieu, and that large numbers of women seemed to find their situation fairly satisfying, presumably even happy and pleasant. If by current standards women were far from full equality with men, it must also be realized that they were extended a different system of compensations and rewards. The nineteenth century was a romantic and sentimental one, and American society adored and rhapsodized its women, placing them on an elevated pedestal of popular esteem. It was this contemporary ideal of womanhood, with all its cherished connotations, which functioned in observers' appraisals of the Mormon woman's condition. It is submitted here that given this context the distance between pedestal and plurality must have

¹For discussion of the current status of historiography of women and problems of interpretation see Lois W. Banner, "On Writing Women's History," Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies, II (Autumn 1971), pp. 347-58; B. A. Carroll, "Mary Beard's Woman as Force in History: A Critique," Massachusetts Review, 13 (Winter/Spring 1972), pp. 125-143.

seemed awesome indeed. The idea of polygamy confounded not only the principle of romantic love and the lauded position of women in a devotedly monogamous culture but an entire system of morality based on womanly goodness. Polygamy was particularly offensive in its time in that it threatened woman's virtually singular sanctioned access to fulfillment and prestige--marriage and the family. Whatever gains women had acquired were recent ones and had to be all the more jealously guarded and protected.

The nineteenth century ideal of womanhood. "Ideal womanhood" in nineteenth century America was more than a set of concepts describing acceptable behavior; it was a phenomenon, universally recognized and acclaimed.² The idealization of womanhood was not uniquely American.

²The subsequent discussion admittedly presents a simplified and general view of the subject of nineteenth century sex roles and family norms and ideals. Among the more significant and comprehensive works in this field which have been implemented in this study are the following: William E. Bridges, "Family Patterns and Social Values in America, 1824-1875," American Quarterly, XVII (Spring 1965), pp. 3-11; Arthur W. Calhoun, A Social History of the American Family from Colonial Times to the Present (3 vols.; Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1917-19); Sidney Ditzion, Marriage, Morals and Sex in America: A History of Ideas (New York: Bookman Associates, 1953); Eleanor Flexner, Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States (Cambridge: Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 1959); Ronald W. Hogeland, "'The Female Appendage': Feminine Life-Styles in America, 1820-1860," Civil War History, 17 (June 1971), pp. 101-114; Donald B. Meyer, The Positive Thinkers: A Study of the American Quest for Health, Wealth, and Personal Power from Mary Baker Eddy to Norman Vincent Peale (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1965); Andrew Sinclair, The Better Half: The Emancipation of the American Woman (New York: Harper and Row, 1965); Page Smith, Daughters of the Promised Land: Women in American History (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1970); Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," American Quarterly, XVIII (Summer 1966), pp. 151-174. The following unpublished studies have also been helpful: Kirk Jeffrey, Jr., "Family History: The Middle-Class American Family in the Urban Context, 1830-1870" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1972); Robert Elno McGlone, "Suffer the Children: The Emergence of Modern Middle-Class Family Life in America, 1820-1870" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles,

It was part of a pattern found in all industrializing western European countries in the nineteenth century. As such, it meant that women, simply by virtue of their sex, deserved preferential treatment from men. Women were in turn idealized, considered to be inherently endowed with such traits as piety, tenderness, sweetness, and superior goodness. Everywhere women were proclaimed as sweethearts, wives, and especially as mothers, and their usual habitat--the home--was painted in rosy hues. In America, the evolution of this ideal and its accoutrements coincided with the changing circumstances the society had to confront, and its wide circulation and perpetuation seemed to fulfill a number of social needs.³ The rise of this cult of womanhood and the home could be interpreted as part of the overall effort of American culture at this time to construct for itself a distinct heritage and destiny, complete with distinct institutions.⁴ If the actual conditions leading to the creation of the womanly ideal were in time forgotten, the central assumption persisted through the rest of the century. In an optimistic era devoted to progress and social betterment, many people believed that the American woman had been accorded the highest station yet achieved in the history of civilization.

1971); Mary Patricia Ryan, "American Society and the Cult of Domesticity, 1830-1860" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1971).

³Bridges, "Family Patterns and Social Values."

⁴For discussion of this process, see Marvin Meyers, The Jacksonian Persuasion: Politics and Belief (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1957).

Precisely what was this prevailing condition of American womanhood from which the daughters of Zion seemed so far removed? The early nineteenth century marked the arrival of the New Woman, a creation of urbanization and the accumulation of money, who had access to more leisure and material wealth than had been possible to her female forbears. In the shift from rural to urban means of livelihood well under way in the east by the 1830's, women's roles underwent a restructuring. With the development of urban centers in the east, a much more distinct division of labor according to sex became apparent among families in the expanding middle class. Through this process, the relative positions and duties of men and women became more widely separated, and an identifiable ideal for women's behavior and how women were to be treated became more apparent.⁵

The changing circumstances surrounding the family institution necessitated a departure from its earlier heritage. In New England colonial families, the wife's place was subordinate to that of the husband, who was regarded as the spiritual and authoritarian leader. The home, however, was such a focal point of the family's activities that it could hardly be designated as "woman's place" any more than agricultural work was strictly masculine. Women had specific household tasks, but often husband and wife were more or less co-workers in the fields or in the village store. In addition, the Puritans' church organization served to integrate both men and women alike into the entire social life of the community. The roles of husband and wife were in some respects overlapping, and under the rural, frontiering way of life both faced an equally

⁵Hogeland, "'Female Appendage'"; Ryan, "Cult of Domesticity," pp. 1-33.

hard existence.⁶ The same situation was the case in frontier, agrarian regions, including Utah, well through the late 1800's, where pioneer settlers simply could not afford to parcel out labor in terms of a rigid sex role structure.⁷

With the growth of commercial and business centers in the early nineteenth century a different form of family life became more general. The modern conjugal family, as an exclusive and strictly defined unit, dates from this period. Husbands took on the sole responsibility of supporting their families, while their wives were not expected to contribute to the income. In the eastern cities, a man's status was often judged in part by the idleness of his wife.⁸ Even domestic tasks could be dispensed with easily enough through the hiring of servants. As women withdrew from making overt and observable economic contributions to the family, they needed other attributes to bolster their diminished role.⁹

The vastly different world inhabited by middle-class men and women gave rise to an elaborate designation of activities as either

⁶ John Demos, A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970); Edmund Morgan, The Puritan Family: Religious and Domestic Relations in Seventeenth-Century New England (New York: Harper and Row, 1944).

⁷ Sinclair, Better Half, pp. 204-6; William Forrest Sprague, Women and the West: A Short Social History (Reprint ed.; New York: Arno Press, 1972), pp. 38-51.

⁸ Smith, Daughters of Promised Land, pp. 90-93.

⁹ Glenda Gates Jackson, "The Subtle Subversion: Changes in the Traditionalist Image of the American Woman," Historian, XXXII (February 1970), pp. 210-227.

masculine or feminine. Men moved in the world of business; they needed to be aggressive, managerial, astute. Woman's sphere was that of the home. She needed to be compassionate and tender, attentive to the finer points of life which the men neglected. Women were supposedly made of finer stuff than men, more delicate, and unable to withstand the same amount of physical or mental exertion. They were considered frail, emotional, and irrational. In marriage, the husband was to provide the "head," the woman the "heart." Since religion had come to be viewed as an affair of the heart, women excelled in piety. Since women were not tainted by worldliness like the men, they were thought to be more pure. So polarized, each sex could act as a counterweight to the other. Thus conventional notions of morality became linked to the concept of womanly virtue and the close spiritual bond of monogamous marriage.¹⁰

The belief in female weakness in some ways justified the existence of the new leisure class of women in the early nineteenth century. "Women up to the War and beyond were nourished in the cult of female delicacy and refinement."¹¹ Their cultivated weakness was taken as a sign of gentility and social rank and reinforced their actual dependent lifestyle. Since women were weaker, they needed to be protected and provided for. If their weakness limited their activity, they received deference and chivalric treatment in return. In fact, one of the primary features of nineteenth century American society noted by virtually all

¹⁰Bridges, "Family Patterns and Social Values," pp. 8-11; Welter, "Cult of True Womanhood."

¹¹Calhoun, Social History of American Family, II, p. 213.

foreign visitors was the pampering and flattery men accorded the female sex, regardless of age or class, in all matters of etiquette.¹² The most conservative implication of female weakness was that as ornaments of beauty and refinement, supportive to but not intrusive upon the affairs of men, women fulfilled their social purpose. Women in this situation were to assume the role of ladies, which meant donning the elaborate dress and mannerisms of this station and learning all the social arts and pleasantries which would enhance the prestige of their husbands--a dependent position, but an esteemed one.¹³

Much was made of the idea of woman's purity and moral superiority in the nineteenth century. Since women were not involved in the business of money-making in a competitive, mobile society, they seemed more virtuous than men and thus the perfect guardians of morality and social stability. As historian Barbara Welter has convincingly demonstrated, for all her weakness the nineteenth century American woman had a very important social task--she was "to uphold the pillars of the temple with her frail white hand."¹⁴ Ensconced in the home, woman was to perpetuate morale and Christian precepts to the benefit of the whole society.

In theory, moral guardianism took women out of the realm of being mere parasitic ornaments and expanded the definition of their position in the home. This moral guardian, or "True Woman," as she came to be

¹²Smith, Daughters of Promised Land, pp. 78-79; Robert G. Athearn, Westward the Briton (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962), pp. 65-68.

¹³Hogeland, "'Female Appendage'," pp. 103-5; Sinclair, Better Half, pp. 113-126.

¹⁴Welter, "Cult of True Womanhood," p. 152.

called, was given form through the writings of Mrs. Sarah Hale, editor of the extremely popular Godey's Lady's Book, and through the plethora of best-selling domestic novels and manuals written throughout the middle and late nineteenth century.¹⁵ Most of these novels dealt with the theme of the sanctity of the home and the efforts of True Women to keep it so. Often the men were portrayed as base, sensual creatures who were easily led astray by alcohol, greed, lust, and gambling. The heroine--either wife, prospective wife, mother, or sister--usually caused the errant male to realize his mistakes and give up his evil ways. True Women were to be submissive, but, according to theory, each could wage a war on masculine depravity by setting an example of piety and rectitude for men to follow. As much of this literature declared, all social problems would be solved if every man could feel a pure and spiritual love for one True Woman. In these stories men were either destroyed by their excesses or redeemed by women's uplifting companionship; the elevating influence of womanly affections made virtue triumphant. This oft-repeated parable helped to define the social function of women and accorded them, at least mythically, a sense of power.

For in apposition with the concept of woman's moral propensities was a none too flattering opinion of masculine nature. Nineteenth century morality was often thought of in terms of self-control and self-discipline, of inner impulses and drives that had to be resisted and conquered. This applied more to men than to women, who were supposedly

¹⁵Riley, "Subtle Subversion"; Ryan, "Cult of Domesticity," pp. 34-78, pp. 250-294; James D. Hart, The Popular Book: A Study of America's Literary Taste (3d ed.; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), pp. 85-139; William Wasserstrom, Heiress of All the Ages: Sex and Sentiment in the Genteel Tradition (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1959), pp. 3-53.

restrained by their latent capacity for being and doing good. Men, however, were constantly torn between their higher and baser instincts; left to themselves, it was assumed they would choose the latter. The containment of masculine sexuality seemed to be almost an obsession among mid- and late-nineteenth century novelists and reformers alike.¹⁶

With increased emphasis on the moral qualities of women, and the lack of them in men, the figure of wife and mother took on additional status and importance. If the middle-class wife found herself operating in a constricted circle, at least she could take solace in knowing that within her home she was queen of her own domain. Here she knew her life had purpose. If marriage and motherhood was the main option available to women, there was ample justification to convince them that, after all, such was the most satisfying and sublime endeavor of the human race.

As wife, woman was to temper and refine her husband's coarser nature. Similarly, motherhood also demanded moral responsibilities. At least by mid-nineteenth century more emotional and affectionate ways of child-rearing had become fashionable.¹⁷ With the decline of the older Calvinist doctrine of innate depravity came more lenient attitudes. Children were not wicked unregenerates to be severely punished; they were basically innocent and required instead patient guidance and corrective, both of which demanded more time and energy from the parents. But since the

¹⁶ Charles E. Rosenberg, "Sexuality, Class and Role in 19-th Century America," American Quarterly, XXV (May 1973), pp. 133-153; Ronald G. Walters, "The Erotic South: Civilization and Sexuality in American Abolitionism," American Quarterly, XXV (May 1973), pp. 177-201.

¹⁷ For full discussion of nineteenth century middle-class child-rearing practices, see McGlone, "Suffer the Children."

father was preoccupied away from his family, much of the inculcation fell to the mother. By the 1840's, ministers, doctors, reformers and self-proclaimed "experts" had begun directing numerous manuals to mothers as to how to carry out this duty. Virtually no aspect of the growing child's life could the mother afford to overlook. Women were told that raising upright Christian children was absolutely the most patriotic and religious duty they could perform. This mother-figure, "this holy being of total virtue," was "revealed as the key figure in civilization" in nineteenth century America, heralded no less than Minute Men or the flag.¹⁸

The elevation of woman as domestic priestess coincided with a romanticization of home life in general. Few other institutions of the nineteenth century called forth such effusive emotional rhetoric as did home and family. The home was praised through every cultural medium--not only in novels, but in poetic odes, Currier and Ives lithographs, and the beloved songs of Stephen Foster. The home tableau as envisioned in these mediums drew on such sentimental features as the picket fence, the parlor, the hearth, well-scrubbed, angelic children--daughter with her doll, son with his pet, an attentive husband, and sweet-faced wife.¹⁹ In essence this type of home was static and isolated from the rest of society, but these were precisely the features which made it so appealing. The home was to be tranquil, a retreat from materialism and motion.

¹⁸ Meyer, Positive Thinkers, p. 54.

¹⁹ Carl Bode, ed., American Life in the 1840's (New York: New York University Press, 1967), p. 55; Carl Bode, The Anatomy of American Popular Culture, 1840-1860 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), pp. 269-73.

If the nineteenth century brought bewildering changes, one could escape the chaos with thoughts of home. And woman was the sentimental core of the entire home ethos.

The home, then, conceptualized as a woman-centered and child-oriented haven became a central institution in nineteenth century life. When it operated according to the formula, this arrangement had numerous advantages. It freed men to pursue vigorous, active lives outside the home secure in the knowledge that domestic tasks and the proper rearing of children would be well attended. The greater importance attached to the wife-and-mother role, and to the corollary cult of domesticity, implied benefits in pride and self-esteem for the women. Woman's sphere was separate and different from man's, yet it was construed to carry equal, or even superior, stature. Within the home, woman was commonly regarded as custodian of the moral welfare of her family, no less the republic. The idea of separate spheres excluded women from many fields of endeavor, yet according to the ideal, the home offered one prerogative women could point to with assurance as their own.

The achievement of the family ideal in a workable form was of course an aspiration, something most Americans seemed to associate with the good life. It meant a certain level of affluence if women were to be removed from the economic realm. If the ideal at the beginning of the century applied only to the situation of the new eastern middle class evolving from the rise of business and industry, these developments became more widespread and this type of family pattern more typical by the time of the Civil War.²⁰ As towns grew and prospered along the frontier in

²⁰Meyer, Positive Thinkers, pp. 47-48.

the nineteenth century, most of them in time could boast of their class of genteel, upper-crust women, who, as in eastern areas, became arbiters of social practices and modes.²¹ The virtues of womanly idleness and weakness had little application to the severe drudgery some groups of women were actually undergoing during this period, particularly frontier wives and the poor and immigrant female laborers of the urban factories and textile mills. These realities were accorded little place in the optimistic emphasis on the lofty and perfect rank enjoyed by women of the middle class.²² The middle class in America has always exerted influence far out of step with its size, and so with the womanly ideal. As regional economies developed, more women were able to share in the benefits of this lifestyle.

To be sure, the home and woman's activities therein were assigned importance far out of proportion to their functional worth. Some historians have noted that the concept of home came to replace nature as a source of romantic idealism and inspiration by mid-nineteenth century, serving as a similar alternative to the tensions of a mechanizing age.²³ Thus preservation of the home as a pristine shrine was more than a matter of passing interest; it helped to fulfill a social need for a sense of permanence and stability.

²¹Louis B. Wright, Culture on the Moving Frontier (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955), pp. 226-30.

²²Gerda Lerner, "The Lady and the Mill Girl: Changes in the Status of Women in the Age of Jackson," in Women and Womanhood in America, ed. by Ronald W. Hogeland (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath and Company, 1973), pp. 90-102.

²³Hogeland, "'Female Appendage'," pp. 105-109. The best discussion of this general theme of anti-mechanization in American life is Leo Marx, The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

The other important feature relevant to this discussion is the place in which this scheme put women. It could be argued that the theories of woman's weakness and superior refinement were merely rationalizations to induce women to accept a limited field of activity within the home and mask the truth of an actually inferior and dependent status. On the other hand, in the home many women actually did hold an eminent position, one with which most of them seemed contented and an advancement which seemed well worth protecting. They were, after all, maintained and catered to, and, depending on personalities and circumstances, they could exercise varying degrees of authority over other members of their family. In a sense they possibly exerted more real power over others in their domestic domains than men could in their masculine sphere as voters, in their occupations, and so on.²⁴ Since marriage and the home provided women with so many benefits, it became a crucial matter to remove all threats to these institutions.

It is easy enough to identify failures of the ideal. Some husbands and wives chafed under the rigid role delineation and found domesticity smothering. The existence of prostitution was one indication of male discontent with domesticity, yet the practice was accommodated by means of the double standard. No one liked to admit the fact of prostitution, yet it was viewed as something of a necessary evil to protect the purity of the wives. For prostitution in effect represented the categorization of women as either good--decent, untainted wives and mothers--or bad--

²⁴Gerda Lerner, "New Approaches to the Study of Women in American History," Journal of Social History, III (Fall 1969), pp. 60-61.

voluptuous women to be used for sexual purposes.²⁵ Attitudes toward the prostitute herself varied. She was often the target of righteous indignation as an inherently corrupt and evil being, the scum of society. Alternatively and less commonly she was viewed sympathetically as a victim of male lust. Occasionally ambitious ladies' societies of the nineteenth century carried their Bibles to the brothels to reform their fallen sisters.²⁶

Some women, too, found domesticity stifling. The feminism of the 1850's would not have germinated had not some women found the home a disappointing outlet for their talents and energies. Yet the woman's rights movement of the nineteenth century was never able to undermine the ideal of the home role for women. Before the Civil War, American feminism was at its most radical. Its most outspoken exponents--Margaret Fuller, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan Anthony, and others--challenged a whole host of practices by which women were made subordinate to men, including women's limited educational and professional opportunities, their inferior legal and political status, and the double standard. Some, like Horace Greeley, listened and agreed, but most others were baffled at how women could find fault with what they already had.²⁷ After the Civil War, the earlier outcry began to accommodate itself more to the status quo.

²⁵ Smith, Daughters of the Promised Land, 73, pp. 230-31; Sinclair, Better Half, pp. 73, 230-31.

²⁶ Carroll Smith Rosenberg, "Beauty, the Beast and the Militant Woman: A Case Study in Sex Roles and Social Stress in Jacksonian America," American Quarterly, XXIII (October 1971), pp. 562-84; William L. O'Neill, Everyone Was Brave: The Rise and Fall of Feminism in America (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), p. 31.

²⁷ Fred Lewis Pattee, The Feminine Fifties (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1940), pp. 92-93.

The more moderate feminism of the late nineteenth century helped to make respectable women's involvement in activities outside the home.²⁸ Later feminists argued for a broader sphere for women on the grounds that it would enhance the integrity of the home; for example, they pointed out that women needed education to be more effective mothers. The implications of moral guardianism gave women sanction to organize and participate in mission work and betterment groups which extended their interests and experiences beyond their immediate family ties. Women were more active than men in the reform movements of the Victorian age, most notably the temperance and anti-polygamy drives, both of which were intended to fortify the place of women in the domestic circle. Woman suffrage became a more popular and fashionable cause, advocated as it would produce a moral uplift in politics and community life. The figure of the public woman became a more familiar and accepted one, indicating substantial gains from earlier, more conservative attitudes. After the Civil War, more women began to enter professional fields, particularly education, journalism, and literature.²⁹

Thus this mighty, inseparable triumvirate--womanhood, the home, and the family--represented an extremely powerful set of values in the last half of the nineteenth century. Not even feminist theoreticians could dissociate the concept of womanhood from the roles of wife and mother; woman as self-determining, independent individual was as yet an unachieved phase of emancipation. Yet if the ideal had its imperfections,

²⁸ For analysis of the late-nineteenth century feminist movement see O'Neill, Everyone Was Brave, pp. 31-145.

²⁹ Flexner, Century of Struggle, pp. 113-130; Sinclair, pp. 144-150.

it was nonetheless universally recognized and regarded, and its meaning was being broadened by the late nineteenth century to make it even more satisfactory and comfortable to women.

The ideal applied to the Mormon woman. It was with these values in mind that Americans viewed the Mormon women of Utah. To a society accustomed to adulating its women upon their monogamous thrones, naturally polygamy would seem terrible and oppressive. The situation of the Mormon woman appeared to be the diametrical opposite of all familiar and venerated principles. The image of the oppressed Mormon woman was the precise inverse of all that American society wanted to sustain in respect to woman's position.

The essential problem of the Mormon woman, as seen by the outside world, was male authority taken too far. Women would tolerate their limited opportunities as long as they were given the home and a prominent place therein. Viewed in this context, what did the Mormon woman have? Since many believed Mormonism a religious sham, polygamy would indeed appear to be a horrible and heartbreaking crime against the female sex. It deprived woman of her solitary and much-glorified right--that to her own husband, her own home, to domestic happiness. The Mormons always claimed that polygamy was a superior practice because it allowed every woman a husband and children, the actualization of the domestic dream, but few outsiders saw the practice in that light. For the nineteenth century domestic ideal was founded upon the extolled principle of a right and true relationship between one man and one woman, characterized at best by a pure and spiritual love. How, then, could the polygamous home be any font of inspiration, when "the chaste union of two minds in the

conjugal relationship" was replaced by the unhallowed union of bodies?³⁰ Woman, given her inherently weak and delicate nature, would be crushed and demoralized; her finest instincts would have no chance to blossom unless man paid her proper regard. If woman's purpose was to refine and improve the moral tone of society, the Mormon woman could hardly be expected to do so in her degraded polygamous position. And men who degraded the female sex degraded themselves, for deprived of the benefits of woman's ennobling influence their latent tendencies for lust and evil would run rampant. If nineteenth century culture prided itself on its respect for women, it seems more understandable why observers termed Mormon society retrograde and barbaric.

This respect for women, generally taken as an indication of cultural advancement and refinement, could be viewed as an aspect of a well-established progress myth in American society. The mood of America in the last half of the nineteenth century was forward-looking in many ways as suggested by expansive economic and foreign policies, the conquest of the frontier, and a belief in the nation's destiny as vanguard of Christian enlightenment. Polygamy as a social practice ran counter to this progress myth as it harked back to pre-Crusade or oriental times. Thus Mormon polygamy, associated with the despotism and indolence of some earlier phase of cultural evolution, was seen as a deplorable lapse into the past.

³⁰ Benjamin G. Ferris, Utah and the Mormons: The History, Government, Doctrines, Customs, and Prospects of the Latter-Day Saints from Personal Observation during a Six Months' Residence at Great Salt Lake City (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1854), p. 255.

These themes are quite apparent in the nineteenth century writings on the Mormons. Some thought that simply because of their weakness and delicacy, women deserved better than the polygamous lot. It was said that polygamy quickly debilitated woman, for her integrity, while purer, was more vulnerable than man's. As Jules Remy wrote, a man in polygamy could not retain his virtue,

but even admitting that he can, even giving man credit for being such a prodigy of impossible heroism, how can we conceive it possible in the woman,--in that nature which is so much more feeble, and of a so much more delicate fibre?³¹

The polygamous household supposedly did awful things to woman's nature; she became jealous, conniving, deceitful. She became unsuited for her true role as moral guardian, and in terms of current distrust of the masculine nature, no one could take her place.

The typical Mormon home as imagined and depicted by many contemporaries contradicted at every point the current domestic ideal so beloved and praised. The ideal of husband and wife occupying equitable and agreeable spheres was replaced by the configuration of lecherous master and abused slaves. In their unhappy state of mind, women could not fulfill their God-given capacities for spreading sweetness and light, and the whole community would suffer. As Remy said,

There can be no greatness, no future, no life for societies, without the emancipation of woman, that sould which has been given as a sister to our soul, to relieve them from the weight of isolation.³²

³¹ Jules Remy and Julius Brenchley, A Journey to Great-Salt-Lake City (London: W. Jeffs, 1861), II, pp. 90-91.

³² Ibid., p. 172.

Instead of being a happy retreat from the problems of the world,
The Mormon home was fraught with tensions, disputes, and sorrows.

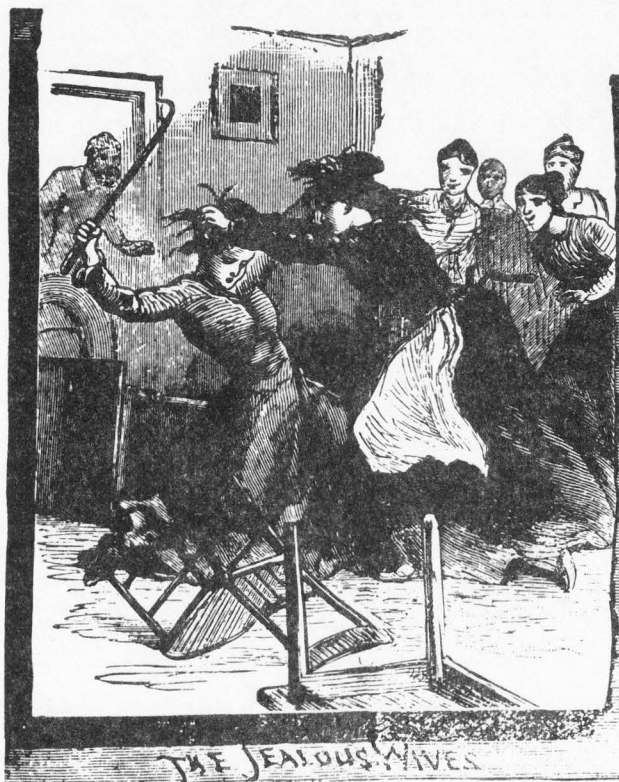


Figure 6. Mormon home life.*

Oppressed as she was, the Mormon woman could not be a good mother. Anti-polygamists continually asserted that children of polygamous homes were ill-fed, ill-behaved, malformed, mentally retarded, and prone to disease. A quasi-scientific study in 1876 reported that 40 percent of all children

* From The Mysteries of Mormonism; courtesy of Utah State Historical Society.

of polygamous families died before the age of eighteen.³³ Another commentator stated that in Utah one found a great number of people with deformed eyes, limbs, hands and feet, by-products of their polygamous heredity.³⁴ Decidedly this was not the American way. President Grover Cleveland spoke for the sentiments of the Gentile public as a whole when he delivered his first annual message to Congress in December 1885. He stated that "the strength, the perpetuity, and the destiny of the nation rest upon our homes" and that the mothers of America, "who rule the nation as they mold the characters ... of their sons" had the inalienable right to be

secure and happy in the exclusive love of the father of [their] children, [to shed] the warm light of true womanhood, unperverted and unpolluted, upon all within [their] pure and wholesome family circle. These are not the cheerless, crushed, and unwomanly mothers of polygamy.³⁵

The drive to end polygamy, then, may be viewed as the efforts of a developing society to bestow its benefits upon all women, to raise all of them to the same enlightened state. These were certainly the common justifications used to support the abolition of polygamy, and many sincere individuals were no doubt motivated by this seemingly benevolent purpose. Yet this interpretation does not totally justify the great

³³J. H. Beadle, "Social Experiments in Utah," Popular Science Monthly, IX (August 1876), pp. 479-80.

³⁴Testimonial of Angie Newman, U.S., Senate, Report of the Education and Labor Committee on an Amendment intended to be proposed to the Sundry Civil Bill providing for an appropriation to aid in the establishment of a School in Utah ... with a view to the suppression of polygamy therein, S. Rept. 1279, 49th Cong., 1st sess., 1886.

³⁵"First Annual Message to Congress of Grover Cleveland," December 8, 1885, in James D. Richardson, ed., Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897 (10 vols. 53d Cong., 2nd Sess., House Misc. Doc. No. 210, Pts. 1-10 [Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1907]), VIII, p. 361.

extent or the intensity of the concern for the Mormon woman's condition. Unbiased visitors to Utah found robust children, cheerful homes, and workable family situations in spite of deviations from the prevalent marriage pattern, and the Mormons themselves, both men and women, continued their support of this theologically-based practice. Granted there was room for misinterpretation of polygamy given current standards, but this does not explain the obviously fabricated content of much of the anti-polygamy writing. This may be understood more fully by discussing the relationship of the image of the oppressed Mormon woman to the larger theme of anti-Mormonism in nineteenth century America.

The Mormons came to be viewed as objectionable in part because of their supposed aberrations from current attitudes toward women and the home. Yet this formed only one area of controversy; the Latter-day Saints were also termed pagan, despotic, undemocratic, and directly subversive to other American ideals.³⁶ Their theocracy contradicted the separation of church and state, their economic practices the system of competitive free enterprise. As the non-Mormon population of Utah began to grow, the desire to curb the church's political and economic influences became more acute. It was in this context that the image of the oppressed Mormon woman played an active and significant historical role. The notion of the suffering, victimized polygamous wives was used as the perfect demonstration of the men's presumably tyrannical, threatening tendencies and lent support to the efforts to restrict the church's

³⁶David Brion Davis, "Some Themes of Counter-Subversion: An Analysis of Anti-Catholic, Anti-Masonic, and Anti-Mormon Literature," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 47 (September 1960), pp. 205-224.

power in Utah. The method of the active anti-Mormons, many of them Utah-based, involved a play on the heartfelt attachments of the American public concerning women and the family, with the intent of making the Mormon leaders look as despicable as possible. The "in the toils" image of Mormon womanhood must be viewed in part as the propagandist creation of self-interested Gentile parties in Utah. This image proved to be a potent weapon, for anti-polygamy measures were accompanied by legal constraints upon the Utah court system, voting procedures, and church landholding and business policies.

From the perspective of the American society as a whole, however, the concern over the Mormon woman's condition may have fulfilled less crude and more subtle needs. Reformers could have directed their efforts toward assisting groups of women close at hand with much more serious problems than the wives of Mormondon--mill workers, prostitutes, urban immigrants, for example. The rise of social work and settlement houses by the late nineteenth century represented efforts to cope with these problems, but none of these issues ever caused the full-fledged crusade brought on by polygamy. It might be suggested that concern for the Mormon women provided a convenient outlet from confrontation with some of these more disturbing and complex dislocations.

It is worth noting that all the most violent anti-polygamy works were written by women--Ann Eliza Young, Fanny Stenhouse, Maria Ward, Metta V. Fuller, Cornelia Paddock, Mrs. B. G. Ferris, not to mention the many women who participated in the reform movement in other ways. Apostates Ann Eliza Young and Fanny Stenhouse wrote from embittered personal experience, but what about the other "critics in crinoline"?

Anti-polygamy books were usually financially lucrative and men attempted to capitalize, but none of their works were as effective or sold as well as those written by women authors. The women's militance could be interpreted as moral guardianism, as efforts to do away with all evidences of male lust and threats to the home. Polygamy was, after all, viewed as a transgression against the female sex, and who but women are better qualified to speak on the issue?

Yet perhaps the explanation lies deeper, in fears and doubts that their own situations as women fell short of the satisfactions supposedly guaranteed them by the current ideal. Possibly the women who decried the oppressed and subservient position of the Mormon sisters unconsciously mirrored their own actual sense of limitation and subordination, and, judging by the success of their works, they seemed to speak for a common problem. This is of course speculative, but it could be pointed out that the mere act of a woman writing a book at that time was a form of rebellion, or at least an indication that some of these women anti-polygamists were themselves seeking outlets from the constraints of the home role.

Then, too, discussion of the Mormon wives perhaps allowed Gentile women an escape from facing the fact that their own marriages and homes were not as stable or perfect as they would have liked to believe. Polygamy was an actual but distant reality, therefore psychologically easier to deal with than the possibility of one's own husband's infidelities. It may be that the image of the oppressed Mormon woman was the projection of all the insecurities and ambiguities women felt in a society which condoned a double standard. This sort of emotional

identification provided all the more reason to shed pity on the Mormon women and vent displaced ire on their polygamous husbands.

Such an interpretation would explain why the image of the oppressed Mormon woman so often revolved around the figure of the first wife. The position of the first wife implied many of the jealousies and doubts Gentile wives might have felt about their status and the loyalty of their husbands' affections. In polygamy the threat to the first wife's status was readily identifiable in the form of the other wives; monogamous Gentile wives faced other threats to their position, the sources of which were more obscure. With few exceptions, late-nineteenth century women defined threats to the home in their most obvious outcroppings--the saloon, the brothel. A more covert threat to the wife's security was the world of work which drew the husband away from the home. A husband's absorption in his occupation or profession could have meant a source of unhappiness for his wife, with his job roughly equivalent in psychological effect to the presence of a plural wife. All the elements of wifely insecurity were there, built into a social structure which taught wifely dependence and expectations of intensely close and satisfying relationships between husband and wife. But the roots of the problem were difficult to perceive, even more difficult to challenge, when women were so often told that marriage was the perfect state.

It is no great wonder then, for example, that a book like Fanny Stenhouse's An Englishwoman in Utah (1880) was so popular, detailing as it did the author's personal reactions as a first wife to the advent of a second. Describing her feelings at seeing her husband and the new wife together she wrote

They tripped off together as light-hearted and happy as children, while I remained rooted to the spot, tearing my pocket-handkerchief to pieces, and wishing I could do the same with them.³⁷

Other American women were also "rooted to the spot" in different ways, their sources of frustration and dissatisfaction more complex than the intrusion of a plural wife. The circumstances of the first wife in plural marriage did seem parallel in these subliminal ways to the condition of other American wives, possibly explaining why numerous Gentile women became so obsessed with the polygamy issue.

On the other hand, some women seemed quite solidly content with the current social framework, as this woman who found polygamy a worse social evil than prostitution:

Prostitution may be practiced to a great extent and still the ideal of pure womanhood and the true marriage will not be shattered or lost sight of. As the counterfeit coin proves the existence and value of the genuine, so the presence of a class of degraded women and their unhallowed relations throws out in bold relief the purity, dignity and loveliness of the wives, mothers and daughters of our land, to whom they are the unhappy exceptions. Prostitution only degrades its victims, and the men who associate with them; but where polygamy is the rule all women are essentially degraded.³⁸

This self-righteous morality of Victorian women was what insured them the right to be treated as ladies, the position they wanted to maintain. Still, one wonders how Victorian women could justifiably adhere to a morality which so callously viewed the prostitute, a member of the same sex, and could make less of prostitution than the relatively benign and self-contained influence of plural marriage. Notwithstanding all its

³⁷ Mrs. T. B. H. Stenhouse, An Englishwoman in Utah: The Story of a Life's Experience in Mormonism (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1880), pp. 306-7.

³⁸ Amanda Dickinson, "Polygamy Degrades Womanhood," Woman's Journal (Boston), 29 March 1879, p. 97.

contradictions, this system of morality was fairly well entrenched, and this was what the Mormons had to confront.

Conclusions. This chapter has dealt with some of the impulses and motivations which led to the popular view of the Mormon women as a downtrodden, underprivileged social group. The American society seemed to feel it had something to offer to the women of Utah, but this urge was so self-conscious and such a preoccupation that it hardly indicates a very tolerant or liberal attitude. One might think that the polygamy question could have caused some observers to more critically evaluate the prevalent theories of woman's place, but apparently this was such a deeply-imbedded and fundamental set of principles that it imperatively had to be reinforced. The perceptive Englishman Richard Burton was virtually the only observer of the Mormons to make a radical departure from this pattern. He actually criticized the American practice of idolizing women. In Utah, Burton wrote, "womanhood is not petted and spoiled as in the Eastern States" and thus he believed the Mormon woman was "happier than when set upon an uncomfortable and unnatural eminence."³⁹ In other words, the Mormons did not restrict their women by making them into ladies and goddesses, but allowed them to be, simply, women. This type of equality, with all its implications, held little place in the popular sentiment of late-nineteenth century America.

³⁹ Richard F. Burton, The City of the Saints and Across the Rocky Mountains to California, ed. by Fawn M. Brodie (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), p. 481.

CHAPTER III

ALTERNATIVES TO "IN THE TOILS": OTHER POTENTIAL

IMAGES OF THE MORMON WOMAN, 1852-1890

Let us forget ... all reference to polygamy or monogamy. Rather let us think of [the women of Mormonism] as apostolic mediums of a new revelation, who at first saw only a dispensation of divine innovations and manifestations of the age.

--Edward W. Tullidge
. The Women of Mormondom, 1877

The two previous chapters of this study have discussed a number of the Gentile views and representations of Mormon womanhood between 1852 and 1890 from the standpoint of the dominant culture and its reactions to a new, unusual religious sect and its social practices. That the women of Utah were so frequently written about and discussed, particularly in the context of being an oppressed, misused social group, highlights the basic fact that they were thought to be unlike the rest of American women, and that Mormon society dealt with women in a divergent and undesirable manner. Mormon women in some of their attitudes and activities actually were unique, but for few of the same reasons brought out by the popular stereotype, essentially one-dimensional with its heavy emphasis on polygamy. Numerous Gentiles seemed to have been plagued with what could be called "tunnel vision." They saw only plural marriage, exaggerated its importance, and pronounced it an ill, seldom stopping to examine the Mormon woman's situation in some of its other manifestations in the larger framework of her religion and her society.

This chapter will point out some alternative representations and interpretations of Mormon womanhood that Gentiles could have considered in their discussion of the Saints. Certainly there were enough observable features in Mormon society to support a set of images far removed from the predominant "oppression" view. The following alternate images, alone and in combination, approximate the truth and show what the Mormon woman's condition actually was during the last half of the nineteenth century in Utah.

Religious disciple. The Latter-day Saints were fundamentally a group of individuals united in a common religious faith established on the principles revealed to their prophet Joseph Smith. The new faith took on temporal form as the Saints were called to "gather" to Nauvoo, later to Utah, in efforts to establish a religiously-based society. The Mormon woman, then, could have been viewed as essentially an adherent and proponent of the new faith, a disciple of the New Word. The Church of Latter-day Saints attracted and retained many loyal women converts who were no less devout than the men. In light of the fact that the women remained solid in their faith despite persecution suggests that they might also have been thought of as religious martyrs.

Religion acted as a direct and extremely powerful force in the lives of the women of the new Zion, many of whom led very active spiritual lives.¹ Women were believed to have their own spiritual powers and

¹For discussion and examples of the women's spiritual experiences see: Carol Lynn Pearson, Daughters of Light (Provo, Utah: Trilogy Arts Publication, 1973); Augusta Crocheron, Representative Women of Deseret (Salt Lake City: J.C. Graham and Company, 1884); Edward W. Tullidge, The Women of Mormondom (New York: Tullidge and Crandall, 1877); Leon Hartshorn, comp., Remarkable Stories from the Lives of Latter-day Saint Women (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1973).

resources and were encouraged to develop them through prayer and scriptural reading. Hundreds of instances could be cited of women of the nineteenth century church having profound mystical religious experiences--speaking in tongues, prophesying, receiving visions, and possessing the gift of healing. Such occurrences served to heighten the intensity of religious experience and provided assurance to the followers of Joseph Smith that they were indeed a blessed and chosen group, enlightened among the peoples of the world. The popular Gentile image seldom depicted Mormon women finding comfort and inspiration in their professed faith, although this was certainly an outstanding and noteworthy characteristic in the lives of numerous individual women.

The women, however, were not allowed the same means of exercising their faith as that allowed to the men, for in Mormonism the men held the priesthood and filled the various positions of rank in the church structure. In reality, the all-male priesthood of Mormonism was not far out of line with current American attitudes toward women and religious institutions. With the exception of the Quakers, virtually all sects withheld women from the clergy, and it was not until 1853 that the first woman was ordained by a recognized Protestant church in America.² Then, too, one of the radical feminists' chief diatribes was against the clergy, who often enough preached to their congregations on the "curse of Eve" and other dogmas oppressive to women.³ The Mormon

²Antoinette Brown of the Congregational Church of New York; Edward T. James, Janet Wilson James and Paul S. Boyer, eds., Notable American Women 1607-1950: A Biographical Dictionary (3 vols.; Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), s.v. "Blackwell, Antoinette Brown."

³Andrew Sinclair, The Better Half: The Emancipation of the American Woman (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 197-203.

priesthood usually received far more criticism from outsiders than it actually deserved because of the common opinion that plural marriage was the wicked and self-gratifying invention of the male leaders. Nineteenth century American churches were in the process of according women a more significant religious role, and the Latter-day Saints were in several ways more similar than divergent from this pattern.⁴

The Saints' literal rendering of the Old Testament lent strength to their priesthood theory as they incorporated into their beliefs the age-old Judiac tradition that men only were equipped to handle sanctified holy duties. Among the ancient Hebrews, God spoke directly through male patriarchs and prophets; in the Saints' modern Israel there was similar emphasis on men as the anointed messengers of the Lord. The Biblical roots of the Mormon priesthood were set forth in a revelation of Prophet Joseph Smith in 1832, where the men of the faith were declared to be "the sons of Moses and Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God."⁵ In this scheme, women were expected to obey the guidance of their priestly male superiors. This Biblical model was not necessarily demeaning, though, as many of the women counterparts of the Old Testament patriarchs demonstrated admirable and forceful traits as individuals while still remaining loyal to their husbands and to their religious code in service to the Lord. Had contemporary

⁴Barbara Welter, "The Feminization of American Religion: 1800-1860" in Insights and Parallels: Problems and Issues of American Social History, ed. by William L. O'Neill (Minneapolis: Burgess Publishing Company, 1973), pp. 305-331.

⁵"Revelation on Priesthood," 22 and 23 September, 1832, Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Sec. 84.

observers been more attuned to the Saints' theology, they might have seen Mormon women as noble, dedicated latter-day Sarahs, Ruths, and Rachels. As will be noted later, some women proudly and enthusiastically identified themselves with the Old Testament wives, undisturbed by their exclusion from the priesthood.

Among the Mormon women themselves, there was little effort to challenge the priesthood system. Mormonism had no rebellious Anne Hutchinsons who pleaded for the right to preach and seriously challenged church leaders on doctrinal matters. The widely known women apostates rejected Mormonism altogether, emotionalizing rather than raising tenable intellectual arguments. This lack of outspoken women in the church may have been less due to deliberate and repressive male authoritarianism, as observers assumed, than the Old Testament premises ingrained in Mormon doctrine itself. And although they were excluded from the priesthood, the women had other ways to make their influence felt. Both sexes exercised the religious franchise since the founding of the church in 1830.⁶ More significant in effectively utilizing and absorbing the women's energies and talents was the viable operation of auxiliary groups. The women were religious participants as well as disciples, and their goal often seemed to be to work with the leaders rather than against them.

Priesthood theory did not prohibit women from engaging in activities corollary and supportive to the men's, and in this area the Mormon

⁶General Board of the Relief Society, A Centenary of Relief Society, 1842-1942 (Salt Lake City: General Board of Relief Society, 1942), p. 65.

women exerted a great deal of creativity and initiative in integrating themselves into the larger church organization. The Female Relief Society, organized by the women at Nauvoo in 1842, was very important in this regard. A number of the sisters felt that an auxiliary group would be beneficial, both as a means of strengthening and discussing their faith and as a way of practicing their faith through charitable endeavors. Eliza R. Snow drafted the original constitution and by-laws of the organization, a feat quite remarkable in its time.⁷ It may be mentioned that six years later, in 1848, when the first national woman's rights convention was held in Seneca Falls, New York, the women responsible were at a loss as to parliamentary procedure and called upon their husbands for assistance.⁸

Joseph Smith was highly pleased at the idea of the Relief Society as it would involve the female element of the church more directly in the religious life of the community. He met with the sisters, defined their proposed group as one "'under the Priesthood after a pattern of the Priesthood'," and stated "This Church was never perfectly organized until the women were thus organized'."⁹ The Relief Society was intended as a handmaiden to rather than an intrusion upon the priesthood, yet still it represented a unique step toward liberalism in terms of American women and religious institutions. The Relief Society in Utah

⁷ Ibid., p. 14.

⁸ Eleanor Flexner, Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1959), pp. 74-76.

⁹ Centenary of Relief Society, p. 14.

subsequently took on a broader scope of interests, many of them economically-oriented, yet at its inception the institution represented a move toward a sharing of religious duties and responsibilities between men and women. Relief Society meetings sometimes took the form of prayer and Bible-reading sessions. Perhaps more unusual were the activities of the sisters in one community in the late 1800's, who formed groups known as the "Quorums of the Mothers of Israel" patterned after the priesthood.¹⁰ Because of the many and varied aspects of the women's organizations, no woman could legitimately claim that her religious convictions had no chance for expression in Zion.

Observers tended to view the Mormon community in terms of a tyrannical religious leadership versus the exploited multitudes, chief among whom were women. This view overlooked the fact that many Mormon women found their faith rewarding and satisfying and were themselves, to varying degrees, actually incorporated into the church structure. While women were not allowed access to the most powerful positions of leadership, many brethren also had to submit to those at a more elevated rank.

Such were the benefits and obligations of women as disciples of the Mormon faith; for those who accepted Mormonism as the route to eternity, the benefits would become literally immeasurable, far outweighing temporal concerns. Clearly the situation was a good deal more complex than outsiders generally assumed. The Mormon women could have been of interest to their contemporaries for their unusually intense religious fervor and their contributing role in their new and dynamic sect, yet these features received fairly little attention in the nineteenth century.

¹⁰ Charles S. Peterson, Take Up Your Mission: Mormon Colonizing Along the Little Colorado, 1870-1900 (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1973), pp. 248-49.

"Celestial wife." To faithful Mormons marriage was far more than a social practice; it was the temporal link between pre-mortal existence and the hereafter. According to Mormon doctrine, marriage was a means to an end, namely, salvation, as a high priority was placed on individuals bringing new souls into the world. Moreover, the Mormons married for "time and all eternity" so that husbands and wives would reign together in glory for all the eons of the universe. In this doctrinal framework, the Mormon woman's temporal life was only a segment of the unfolding drama of the divine scheme. While Gentile observers did not necessarily have to accept Mormon theories of "celestial marriage" they could have noted that the women themselves believed their worldly situation was but the preparation for and prelude to their celestial exaltation.

Plural marriage among the Saints was basically taught as a religious duty, based on Joseph Smith's revelation of 1843. This document set forth a new covenant between man and the Lord by which the ancient Hebrew custom of taking numerous wives was to be restored. The revelation cited examples of Old Testament figures who were deemed righteous in their polygamy--Abraham, Isaac, David, Solomon, and Moses. The new covenant echoed the Biblical one in many ways. It contained the theme of the Mormons as the "promised people," "the Chosen." As with the Biblical patriarchs, the followers of Joseph Smith were destined to receive great blessings by adhering to divine command.¹¹

¹¹ For example, this passage: "Abraham received promises concerning his seed, and of the fruit of his loins,--from whose loins ye are, viz. my servant Joseph,--which were to continue, so long as they were in the world The promise is yours also, because ye are of Abraham, and the promise was made unto Abraham, and by this law are the continuation of the works of my Father, wherein he glorifieth himself. Go ye, therefore, and do the works of Abraham; enter ye into my law, and ye shall be saved." "Revelation on Celestial Marriage," 12 July 1843, Doctrine and Covenants, Sec. 132.

This new covenant placed much emphasis on procreation as leading to highest exaltation in the sight of the Lord. Not only would the Saints' earthly kingdom become powerful through increase, a parallel to Jehovah's promise to Abraham, "I will make of ye a mighty nation," but each faithful Mormon patriarch could become a ruler over vast multitudes of his own offspring in the afterlife. Polygamy would presumably increase the number of offspring. As in the Old Testament, the covenant included all members of the new Zion, although it was most specifically addressed to the male patriarchs. A man was to instruct his wife in the new law so the plan might be fulfilled through procreation: "then she shall believe, and administer unto him, or she shall be destroyed."¹² Women were caught in a curious bind, for they were taught that Mormon millennial splendor was contingent on their submissive cooperation in polygamy. Yet women were given an important place in the scheme, for men could not reach the highest state of grace without them. In addition, the sisters could justifiably claim that Mormonism gave them a more significant place than any other American religion since they were joined to their husbands for all eternity.¹³ As childbearers, women obviously held the keys to bringing forth the desired multitudes. Mormon plural marriage did not necessarily mean an unbalanced relationship between despotic males and abused females; at least in theory, both sexes had mutual obligations and spiritual rewards.

The Gentile accounts of Mormon society would lead one to think that polygamy was universally practiced; apparently outsiders' curiosity

¹²Ibid.

¹³Welter, "Feminization of American Religion," p. 328.

over the unusual and controversial custom obscured the fact that most nineteenth century Mormon women were monogamous wives. The most thorough historical study done of Mormon family histories has concluded that at its height, polygamy may have been practiced by at most 15 or 20 percent of the total number of families in Utah. Nor were these polygamous households anything like enormous harems, since two-thirds of them contained only two wives.¹⁴ Evidently observers were fascinated by the spectacular size of the households of such eminent figures as Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball. As these men were prominent and well-known church officials, more or less in the limelight of Utah affairs, visiting Gentiles seemed to have generalized from the visible and obvious and come away with an inaccurate impression based on atypical Mormon families. Until more research is available, it is not conclusive exactly how representative the plural wife was in relation to Mormon womanhood as a whole; at least it appears that polygamy was by no means an all-inclusive pattern. Thus "woman's life in Mormon bondage" as an image was not supported by numerical evidence or by the attitude of the many men who hesitantly refrained from marrying many wives.

On the other hand, instances of very real womanly tragedy in polygamy were not unknown, perhaps in ways so profound the full meaning escaped the hack writers of the era. Raised in the belief that plural marriage was the way of righteousness, some women must have felt a terrible sense of disillusionment when husbands were not as just or

¹⁴ Stanley S. Ivins, "Notes on Mormon Polygamy," Utah Historical Quarterly, 35 (Fall 1967), 311-14. Nels Anderson in Desert Saints: The Mormon Frontier in Utah (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942) presents similar statistics for southern Utah settlements.

impartial as they should have been. Some plural wives actually were forced to support themselves and their children, finding themselves in hard circumstances through no particular fault of their own.¹⁵ The usual solutions to the women's problems as suggested in popular literature, though, were too easy and over-simplified to apply to the actual situation. Few plural wives "fled" the Mormons, as kinship and religious ties were powerful and because in doing so a mother could place the legitimacy of her children in doubt. Nor did the Mormon wives die of broken hearts or commit suicide as they did in fictional accounts; often their hardships seemed to cause plural wives to cling more tenaciously to their religion for strength and comfort. This type of strong and stalwart Mormon woman could have been a much more convincing and realistic tragic heroine than the one the novelists most often created.

Within the polygamous group there was a great deal of variety in how families operated, too much so to support any overriding assumption as to the women's oppression and unhappiness. Sociologist Kimball Young in his analysis of nineteenth century plural marriage demonstrated that a sizeable proportion of polygamous wives were fairly flexible and adaptable in their outlook and that over half of the plural families in his study could be categorized as "highly successful" or "reasonably successful."¹⁶ The "celestial wife" seems to have sometimes been an

¹⁵Kimball Young, Isn't One Wife Enough? (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1954), p. 56.

¹⁶Young, Isn't One Wife Enough?, gives some discussion of conflicts and failures in plural marriage; also, Annie Clark Tanner, A Mormon Mother: An Autobiography (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1969).

open-minded, generous and basically contented individual rather than a spiteful or lugubrious one.

Above all, however, if outsiders had more seriously considered the plural wives as "celestial" mates, fulfilling obligations that they believed would lead to eternal bliss, they possibly would have been less disturbed by the temporal practice of polygamy. Marriage to the Gentiles was a moral issue, but so it was to the Mormons who adhered to their form on religious principle. Certainly among ministers and Christian reformers there was extreme hostility toward the notion of Joseph Smith as an inspired prophet of the Lord, particularly since Smith taught marital ideas so divergent from all accepted views. This irreconcilable conflict made it very difficult for Gentiles to view the plural wives according to the theological explanations provided by the Saints themselves and to understand the motivations behind the women's acceptance of the practice.

Woman in a patriarchy. When nineteenth century easterners observed Mormon society and domestic life in Utah, what they might have discerned was their own family heritage of bygone generations. The Mormon household resembled more closely the patriarchal system of Puritan, or even Hebrew character, than it did the extreme seclusion and subordination of wives as in the Islamic harem. Many Saints were of New England descent so that plurality was basically a graft upon a mainstream cultural pattern in family life. What rendered the Mormon pattern irreconcilable from the familiar and traditional New England model was that, as in Brigham Young's case, "Instead of one superficially forbidding lady in blacks or grays, there were nineteen of them."¹⁷

¹⁷ Morris R. Werner, Brigham Young (New York: Harcourt, 1925), p. 350.

Woman's role in a patriarchy is by definition one of subordination and obedience, but her dependent status is usually mitigated by a set of religious and social duties bearing on the men.¹⁸ This interpretation could have been applied in several ways to the Mormon woman's condition. As with her church role and her position in Mormon theology, however, contemporaries saw only the negative, emphasizing the subordination of wives and seldom the corresponding responsibilities of the husbands as taught by the Mormon leaders.

As in other patriarchal societies, the Mormons held that the husband-father was to make important decisions and act as the chief religious instructor, with wives and children holding various positions in the hierarchical arrangement of authority. Church leaders frequently preached the policy of wifely submissiveness in the family. "Women are made to be led, and counselled, and directed," Heber C. Kimball announced in 1857.¹⁹ "It is the decree of the Almighty upon them to lean upon man as their superior," thundered Brigham Young.²⁰ Thus there was probably some truth to observers' comments on the wives' quiet and unobtrusive manner, though it was not necessarily due specifically and exclusively

¹⁸ For a discussion of patriarchalism in Mormon family roles see Herbert Ray Larsen, "'Familism' in Mormon Social Structure" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Utah, 1954); for comparison with its larger tradition, see David R. Mace, Hebrew Marriage: A Sociological Study (London: Epworth Press, 1953) and Edmund S. Morgan, The Puritan Family: Religion and Domestic Relations in Seventeenth-Century New England (New York: Harper and Row, 1944).

¹⁹ Journal of Discourses, by President ..., His Counselors, and the Twelve Apostles (26 vols.; Liverpool: F. D. and S. W. Richards, 1854-1886), V, 29.

²⁰ Ibid., XII, 194.

to polygamy. As an adage from the Deseret Almanac of 1854 described the ideal Mormon wife, she was to be

Like an Echo, speak when spoken to,
And not like an echo, always have the last word.²¹

As in New England colonial families, the Mormon wife seemed to move with relative ease and frequency between home, neighborhood, and church; the Mormon village plan of settlement in Utah allowed a variety of social contacts outside the immediate family. Wives were not cloistered or excluded from the larger society as in a harem, although husbands did seem to have a possessive attitude on the issue of their womenfolk associating with Gentiles. While the men mingled with non-Mormons in business, and to some extent socially, they did not always approve of their wives and daughters doing likewise.²²

The husband's role in the Mormon family was to guide and inspire rather than to tyrannize; as Brigham Young once reminded husbands, "When the wicked rule, the people mourn."²³ Most Gentiles overlooked the feature that in Mormonism, wifely subordination was to be counter-balanced by the male kindness and benevolence befitting a worthy Latter-day Saint. While the Mormons never had a strict code governing family relations, the leaders often took a stance protective to women. In 1853 Elder Orson Pratt, chief theologian of plural marriage, drew up a list of twenty-seven rules as to how plural families should function.

²¹Quoted in Kate B. Carter, comp., Heart Throbs of the West (12 vols.; Salt Lake City: Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, 1939-1951), X, 174.

²²Peterson, Take Up Your Mission, p. 249.

²³Journal of Discourses, XIV, 163.

Pratt advised the husband to treat all of his wives fairly and to provide for their needs: "They, as weaker vessels, are given to him as the stronger, to nourish, cherish, and protect."²⁴ He also condemned physical abuse as a means for husbands to maintain their authority. Nowhere in this pattern were wives considered the social or intellectual equals of men, but the Mormon leaders were not the cruel or violent oppressors of womanhood as depicted by the Gentiles.

While the Mormons may have been behind the times in allowing women more say in family affairs, neither were they barbaric or retrograde. Attitudes toward women in Mormon society appear to have been often simply more conservative and traditionalist, more quaint and rustic, than anything else. When the idea of woman in a patriarchy is combined with such observable qualities of nineteenth century Mormon life as temperance and piety, it is difficult to understand how other Americans, particularly New Englanders, could so often think of the Latter-day Saints as so totally bizarre and so far removed from anything they had ever seen before. Again, reactions to polygamy took precedent over more careful and thoughtful analysis. While the view of woman in a patriarchy could have been a fairly accurate representation, it was by and large neglected.

Western pioneer. When the Mormons migrated to the Salt Lake Valley in the late 1840's and 1850's, and subsequently, as their tendrils of settlement extended into Idaho, Nevada, Arizona, and California, they

²⁴ Orson Pratt, The Seer, I (November 1853), 174.

reflected the westward movement and pioneering endeavors common along the frontier. Mormon women confronted many of the same problems as frontier wives elsewhere--exposure to the elements, lack of services and conveniences, primitive health care, unexpected hardships and crises, and the endless chores of feeding and clothing the family with whatever was available. Because pioneering was such a common feature in the American West in the late 1800's, this aspect of the Mormon woman's condition perhaps understandably elicited little comment. What could have been a source of interest, however, were some of the unique ways in which Mormon women were directly and collectively incorporated into the economic life of their communities. The cooperative economic efforts of the Mormon sisters in the settlement process could have been noted and even implemented in pioneer areas elsewhere.

In frontier Utah, all available physical and human resources were put to use. In part this was a function of necessity to enable the region to support its growing population, but resource development became more important in light of the Saints' desire to create a self-contained economic entity. Most Mormons, coming from strict New England stock, were also instilled with such values as frugality and a belief in work as redeeming. These values were reflected in the economic goals set forth by church leaders, who preached on the evils of excess and encouraged the productive utilization of all materials at hand.²⁵ Even after the railroad came to Utah in 1869, the Mormon leaders continued to impose the idea of self-sufficiency as a means of retaining social

²⁵ Leonard J. Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), pp. 22-28.

and economic solidarity among their people. What the Saints developed, then, were a number of ways to cope with an economy of relative scarcity, self-imposed as it came to be--the same problem faced by other pioneer settlers in the West. Significantly, the Mormons emphasized the value of women as effective and contributing agents in dealing with this problem.

It is evident that the church leaders, particularly President Young, recognized the importance of a rural wife's domestic activities and management. Young frequently asked the sisters to practice thrift and careful organization in their households. Delivering a sermon in the spring of 1857, after several years of bad harvests, Young spoke directly to the sisters on the subject of domestic management. He called for a meat-cooking and bread-baking reform among the housewives of the land, counselling them to use every scrap of food as effectively as possible and in the pantry to "remember the little messes standing here and there."²⁶ Young's basic point was that much want and destitution could be alleviated through the wise planning of the wife in the home, indeed a meaningful bolstering of the housewife's role in relation to her community. Thus the Mormon sisters received a basic course in home economics, Utah style, before the subject made its advent in educational curriculums elsewhere in the country.

Another duty Young asked the sisters to perform for Zion was to simplify their dress. Fashion in general he considered one of the pursuits of the wicked of the world, but he became more concerned with this

²⁶Journal of Discourses, IV, 313.

issue as the railroad neared completion and threatened to bring new stores and articles attractive to the ladies. The women were asked to continue to make their own clothes and refrain from extravagance. Probably the dowdy appearance of the women noted by visiting Gentiles was more a reflection of Young's fashion-editing than any lack of intrinsic beauty or charm in the women themselves.

This type of directive does seem in itself unnecessarily harsh and oppressive, but there were numerous Mormon women who pledged their whole-hearted support to such policies. With Young's encouragement the Relief Societies of the territory established and managed their own co-operative stores where home-produced items were traded and sold. Many local societies also took up such projects as silk-raising and grain-saving.²⁷ The leaders' keen desire to insulate the Mormon economy from intrusion probably served as a greater impetus behind these programs than did any sheer liberality toward women. Once in effect, though, these Relief Society programs did allow women a chance to work among themselves and to exercise their administrative and organizational abilities. Basically the Saints demonstrated how an economy could work to achieve its goals and strengthen itself through effective and collective utilization of womanpower, a worthwhile lesson in itself. However, many contemporaries bitterly opposed the Mormon goal, that of a theocratically-centered enterprise system. Considering the many pursuits

²⁷ Leonard J. Arrington, "The Economic Role of Pioneer Mormon Women," Western Humanities Review, IX (Spring 1955), 145-164; Lucile Johnson, "A Social Analysis of the L.D.S. Relief Society" (unpublished Master's thesis, Utah State University, 1950); Centenary of Relief Society.

and involvements of the Relief Society, it is surprising how it failed to gain any attention whatsoever in observers' commentaries, either in a positive or negative way.

The Relief Society activities were indicative of the way in which the Mormon endeavor in Utah took women off the pedestal of sentiment and encouraged them to participate in the active economic life of the community. In their homes and on farms women were a vital part of the work force, but the church leaders saw them as valuable in other kinds of employment as well. Because Utah was a frontier region and the Mormons wanted to maximize its potentials, Young thought that women should take over such jobs as teaching, printing, telegraphy, and clerical and store work so that the men could be put to use in the fields and in heavy construction work.²⁸ Thus in nineteenth century Utah there seems to have been a move toward equalization of sex roles, where both men and women were expected to contribute according to individual abilities. Only Sarah Kane noted this trend when she wrote "They close no career on a woman in Utah by which she can earn a living."²⁹

Not only as farm wives, then, did the women function as pioneers. In the agriculturally-based villages and towns of the territory, they organized and labored to strengthen the position of their entire developing community. They could have been correctly described as busy, resourceful, practical, and purposeful. While it appears that they

²⁸ Journal of Discourses, XII, 407; XVI, 21.

²⁹ Sarah Wood Kane, Twelve Mormon Homes Visited in Succession on a Journey Through Utah and Arizona (Philadelphia: William Wood, 1874), p. 5.

actually did "toil" a great deal, they took many tasks upon themselves, and their efforts and abilities were not wholly unrecognized in their community.

Emancipated woman. By the time the anti-polygamy crusade got under way in the 1870's, Utah could boast of a respectable class of professional and highly literate women who personified the exact opposite of all that the imagery of oppression and degradation implied. Women dominated the medical profession in Utah; a sizeable number were teachers and writers.³⁰ Through the Relief Society many of them became in effect social workers and businesswomen. The University of Utah was coeducational from its founding in 1850 at a time when many eastern institutions refused to admit female students.³¹ The territorial legislature granted women general elective franchise in 1870, becoming the second governing body in America to do so after Wyoming Territory in 1869. Thus there were a number of features whereby the women of Utah could have been viewed as actually forerunners in the process of feminine advancement.

As will be discussed in the following chapter, these women took steps to inform the non-Mormon world that they were decidedly not the weak-willed, suffering individuals as commonly thought. Most commentaries, however, failed to note that Mormon women had superior status and opportunities in some areas in comparison to women in other parts of America.

³⁰Keith Calvin Terry, "The Contribution of Medical Women during the First Fifty Years in Utah" (unpublished Master's Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1964); Leonard J. Arrington, "Women as a Force in the History of Utah," Utah Historical Quarterly, 38 (Winter 1970), 3-6.

³¹Susa Young Gates and Leah D. Widtsoe, The Life Story of Brigham Young (New York: MacMillan Company, 1930), p. 298.

Conclusions. The major theme of this chapter is that there were a variety of options and alternatives other than the "in the toils" image that Gentiles could have developed in regard to the women of Utah. The images of religious disciple, "celestial wife," woman in a patriarchy, western pioneer, and emancipated woman were all rooted in observable features of Mormon society and were available to any insightful and curious contemporary. Basically contemporaries could have seen the women as a part of their society, not struggling against it or chained beneath it by the dictatorial men. The women of Deseret shared many of the same beliefs and goals of the men, and both, together, moved "onward for Zion."

This discussion possibly helps to put the polygamy outcry in clearer perspective, for by and large observers were little interested in a relativistic analysis of how plural marriage actually operated and how it fit into Mormon society as a whole. To many non-Mormon' standards plural marriage was an evil and a blasphemy, and that was enough to know. Few cared to look more deeply or more carefully.

Given the fact that non-Mormons were more or less culture-bound in their conviction to monogamy and due deference to women, was a different image of Mormon womanhood possible during the period between 1852 and 1890? Yes, but it would have required an abandonment of the characteristically stanch moralistic stance on polygamy, and this was something that most contemporaries were patently unwilling to do. Moreover, the perpetuation of "in the toils" in preference to any other representation of the women indicates the extent to which polygamy was a created issue, that Gentiles with vested political and economic interests found the image a useful device whether it was accurate or not.

Mormon womanhood actually represented many different things which would have been difficult to adequately summarize in a single image. Edward Tullidge, former Saint and biographer of the Mormons, perhaps came closer than anyone else to formulating an adequate and accurate "umbrella" image of the women of Zion. Writing in 1877 he characterized them as

Women with new types of character, antique rather than modern; themes ancient, but transposed to our latter-day experience. Women with their eyes open ... who have dared to enter upon the path of religious empire-building with as much divine enthusiasm as had the apostles who founded Christendom.³²

Tullidge's representation of Mormon womanhood as a paradoxical fusion of the old and new might be well taken. He romanticized and gave them transcendent, almost mythic proportions as mystics and as mothers of a religious race, developing the parallel with the mothers of ancient Israel. His central idea need not be taken so far to be useful. There were a number of traditional, old-fashioned notions toward women present in Mormon society and religion, and of course polygamy was a practice Western culture had long since rejected. On the other hand, it appears that Mormon society was in some ways rather progressive as far as what women were allowed to do; possibly the demands of life in the frontier environment reduced differences in the sex roles and helped to create a more open attitude in Utah toward women's involvement outside the home. Plural marriage seemed to be such an explosive issue that it blew the Mormons entirely off the spectrum of any reasonable consideration of the women's actual place in the ongoing process of acceptable and changing feminine lifestyles in the nineteenth century.

³²Tullidge, Women of Mormondom, p. 1.

These ideas may be extended further by a closer look at the group in Utah referred to as "emancipated women." Many of the most outstanding and accomplished women of Deseret were also plural wives. A partial tabulation might demonstrate this point: Eliza R. Snow, Relief Society president and poetess, one of Brigham Young's sealed wives; Emmeline B. Wells, editor of the Woman's Exponent, fourth wife; Romania Pratt and Ellis Shipp, physicians and medical trainers, both plural wives; Ellen B. Ferguson, founder of the Utah Conservatory of Music, early administrator of the Deseret Hospital, practicing physician, and political organizer, plural wife; Martha Hughes Cannon, physician and eventual state senator, fourth wife.³³ That there was this group in Utah involved in more or less unconventional and demanding careers for women by late-nineteenth century standards may have been due to many things, not the least of which was that most evident distinction of Mormon social life--plural marriage itself. The reinstitution of the ancient custom of polygamy may have in its own subtle ways served as a liberating force for women. This may have occurred by default, with restless or dissatisfied plural wives looking for places to direct their energies, or it may have occurred through the necessity of a wife's supporting her family. Some women may have welcomed polygamy as a great boon as it decreased some of the demands and divided the duties of the wife role,

³³ Andrew Jenson, comp., Latter-Day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia (4 vols.; Salt Lake City: A Jenson History Company, 1901-36); Orson Whitney, History of Utah (4 vols.; Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon and Sons Company, Publisher, 1892-1904), IV, 573-604; Leonard J. Arrington, "Blessed Damozels: Women in Mormon History," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, VI (Summer 1971), 22-31.

allowing them more time to develop personal talents. By these quirks in its machinery, plural marriage did in some cases provide a working method for women to achieve independence from men.

Thus as in the larger American society, women in Mormonism functioned in a web of duties, compensations, and rewards. It may be that most observers never got close enough to this system to observe all its dimensions. Probably equally true is that most Gentiles were incapable of freeing themselves from their ideals, values, and usages to see any good in the practical workings of polygamy. There was a great deal more to be seen in the Mormon woman's condition than polygamy, but few Gentile observers could surmount this obstacle and arrive at a more panoramic view.

CHAPTER IV

THE MORMON WOMEN'S RESPONSE TO "IN THE TOILS"

"Long enough, O women of America, have your Mormon sisters been blasphemed!"

--Edward Tullidge
The Women of Mormondom, 1877

The Gentile image of the Mormon woman, or outsiders' beliefs and perceptions of her situation between 1852 and 1890, had historical significance as an influence in the Mormon-Gentile conflict and as it played a role in gaining support for the political drive to curb plural marriage. From the standpoint of the Mormon women, the Gentile circulation of this image had an impact in ways other than the ultimate one of bringing about an end to their form of marriage. A number of the women of Zion were well-informed as to their image among the Gentile world at large and took vigorous steps to convey a more accurate image of themselves. A by-and-large neglected feature in Gentile discussions was the women's own self-image as evidenced in their public writings and statements during the period studied. Ironically, the non-Mormons' propagation of the view that Mormon women were a weak, oppressed, unintelligent and dissatisfied group of individuals tended to stimulate traits and abilities in the daughters of Zion that were precisely the opposite of those characteristics purported by the stereotype itself.

This chapter will demonstrate some of the implications and results of the non-Mormon "in the toils" image in terms of the response of the women of Utah themselves. Their organized response in challenging their

image among non-Mormons may be defined by three categories: their journalistic effort, the Woman's Exponent; their collective, political response; and their articulated defense of plural marriage. Surely the women of Zion had some fascinating and thought-provoking things to say about themselves and their position, but most significant was the way in which they consistently and positively identified themselves with their church and its religious teachings and actively argued in its behalf. In opposition to "in the toils" appeared a type of counter-image-- "onward for Zion." The women of Zion deliberately tried to project and publicize a picture of themselves as being dedicated, self-confident, and contented individuals, stoutly resistant to Gentile interference.

The Woman's Exponent: testimonial of Mormon womanhood. The Woman's Exponent as a journalistic and business operation has a full and remarkable history in itself, one which cannot be fully detailed in the scope of this paper.¹ Of particular interest to this study is the content and tone of the publication as it portrayed the women of the Mormon Church--as it projected an image--and as its women editors responded to the controversy surrounding their situation among the Gentile world. While the primary purpose of the Exponent was to meet the needs and interests of its Mormon readers, its editors also sought to reach and influence a Gentile audience. The Exponent merits attention

¹The Exponent has not received the full historical study it merits. Brief discussions are available in the following: Orson F. Whitney, History of Utah (4 vols.; Salt Lake City, 1892-1904), II, 835; General Board of Relief Society, A Centenary of Relief Society, 1842-1942 (Salt Lake City: General Board of Relief Society, 1942), 21, 77; Leonard J. Arrington, "Louisa Lula Greene Richards: Woman Journalist of the Early West," Improvement Era, 72 (May 1969), 28-31.

as an effort on the part of the women of Zion to improve public relations and to correct current Gentile misconceptions regarding their character and attitudes. The following comments, based on an examination of Exponent volumes through 1890, will discuss some aspects of the journal and its role in the image-making process.

The Woman's Exponent commenced publication in June 1872, becoming the second periodical expressly for women to appear in the trans-Mississippi West. The Exponent was not sponsored or financed by the Mormon Church, although it was the representative publication of the church women. The journal was largely woman-managed, supported, and produced.² Certainly the foremost figure in the venture was Emmeline B. Wells, who steadfastly functioned as editor from 1877 until publication ceased in 1910. The eight-page Exponent came out regularly at two-week intervals and was dispatched throughout the territory by individual subscription and through local branches of the Relief Society. While the paper was assembled by a small staff in Salt Lake City, many women participated in the effort, either as contributing writers, correspondents, or agents.³ The paper had a board of advisers called the "Committee of Consultation" which was, interestingly enough, exclusively female and autonomous from the priesthood in its operation.⁴ Thus the Exponent represented the work of a substantial number of the women of Zion as well as an undertaking independent of male assistance or intrusion. As the

²Arrington, "Louisa Lula Green Richards," p. 30.

³For a listing of agents and correspondents see Woman's Exponent, 1 October 1873, p. 68; 1 November 1873, p. 84; 1 June 1874, p. 4.

⁴For information on the duties of the Committee of Consultation and a listing of its members see Woman's Exponent, 1 October 1873, p. 68.

Exponent was a respectable and well-produced publication by any standards, it spoke highly for the literacy and intelligence of its women designers and contributors.

The Exponent was partly informative and educational in its service to the Mormon sisters. It reported news of Relief Society meetings, activities, and other social and cultural events within Utah and in this respect imparted the distinct flavor of a frontier newspaper. The "Letters to the Editor" page printed letters from sisters in even the most remote and isolated settlements, attesting to the interest and following the journal received. But the publication also gave ample coverage to what women were doing elsewhere in the country. The Exponent ran topical series of general interest and devoted space to biographical sketches of eminent figures such as musicians, authors, and poets. The paper provided an important communicational link among the women themselves but its scope was not limited to regional or sectarian matters. Judging by their publication, the women of Zion were hardly culturally deprived in comparison to other American women; they had a lively interest in many of the concerns of contemporary Gentile women.

The Exponent served as a forum for the discussion of "woman's sphere." The women of Zion seemed to consider themselves similar in values and goals to other American women, even describing themselves with that ubiquitous nineteenth century phrase, "true womanhood." The frequency of articles discussing the virtues of piety, temperance, and motherhood demonstrate the close association between the Mormon ideal of womanhood and that of the dominant culture. Polygamy seemed to introduce no outstanding change in how Mormon women viewed themselves in their home role; the family was often treated in the same sentimental tones

used by those who lauded the monogamous family. Echoing the moral guardian philosophy, the Exponent often discussed woman's ennobling influence over men. As an article on "The Benefit of Woman to Man" reported, "vicious, lonely" masculine life underwent a "metamorphic change brought on by the love, judgment and guidance of a true woman."⁵ As did many popular woman writers of the era, the Exponent tried to boost the morale of the ordinary housewife by emphasizing her qualities of innate goodness and virtue, though without particular reference to polygamy. In a passage that could have easily appeared in the columns of Godey's Lady's Book, the Exponent editors gave a salute to

she who quietly, without ostentation or parade, fulfills the small home-duties, cheerfully, patiently, heroically and hopefully, unknown save to those who constitute her own immediate circle, and often unappreciated even there.⁶

The Exponent gave woman's home role a high regard and gave no hint of any severe dislocations from current attitudes toward marriage brought on by polygamy.

Yet neither was the Exponent a mere piece of saccharine sentimentality; laced with moralistic invectives and common-sense advice the paper reflected the high standards and sense of duty of the daughters of Zion. The journal went full force in cheerleading for Brigham Young's dress reform, not so much as an economic measure but as fashion and flirtation impeded woman's personal and intellectual growth. As Emmeline Wells characteristically wrote,

Many a superb form and lovely face seem to be considered by their possessor to have been bestowed upon her for no other purpose than

⁵"The Benefit of Woman to Man," Woman's Exponent, 15 October 1872, p. 75.

⁶Woman's Exponent, 1 January 1874, p. 118.

for making conquests and gaining a good match. [The satisfaction] found in deep thought and earnest study, in gaining wisdom and cultivating intelligence, is far greater than any enjoyment realized in air castle-building.⁷

The ideal Mormon woman as given form through the Exponent was serious-minded and shunned all type of idleness and excess. She was to be like the women of the scriptures--"admirable specimens of the Genus; no vanity, no frivolity, no weakness; all is simple dignity, stern duty, and strict obedience to principle."⁸ As exemplified by the earnest and religious tone of many of the paper's essays, this ideal was in fact descriptive of the women, though their writing was not always excessively heavy or humorless. Accordingly, the women of Zion seemed to be almost paragons of propriety, no less Victorian prudery. As stated in a resolution drawn up by the "Young Ladies' Department of the Co-operative Retrenchment Association," a fashion reform group,

Inasmuch as cleanliness is a characteristic of a Saint, and an imperative duty, we shall discard the dragging skirts, and for decency's sake those disgusting short ones extending no lower than the boot tops.⁹

Such words were hardly in line with the licentious and morally negligent Mormon womanhood as portrayed by the common "concubine" or "scarlet woman" image.

⁷"Woman's Aims," Woman's Exponent, 15 October 1872, p. 80.

⁸Hannah T. King, "Women of the Scriptures," Woman's Exponent, 1 March 1878, p. 147. This article was continued in the April 1 and May 1 issues of 1878 and was later published in pamphlet form adapted for use in girls' Sunday school classes (Woman's Exponent, 1 May 1879, p. 230).

⁹Woman's Exponent, 15 July 1879, p. 29.

Yet the Exponent also demonstrated that the women of Mormonism were by no means totally sold on the idea of submissiveness and dependence on men. They were already in possession of a kind of feminist awareness of the limitations imposed on women's advancement in the late-nineteenth century, but they never discussed themselves as uniquely oppressed because of polygamy. From their point of view, they had no need of the "liberation" envisioned by anti-polygamists; many of the sisters were already thinking and striving for themselves, with no disposition to meekly subject themselves to male abuse. In the Exponent plural marriage was viewed with more acquiescence, if not favor, than were such general complaints as the universally inequitable position of women in politics, education, and the professions. The women thought themselves allies, even leaders, in the ongoing process of feminine emancipation but did not desire to tamper with the holy writ of plural marriage.

The Exponent gave a fairly liberal interpretation to "woman's sphere" and thus lived up to the claims of its masthead--"The Rights of the Women of Zion, and the Rights of the Women of All Nations." Education was strongly encouraged not only as a means of achieving self-reliance but as women's individual talents and skills would prove beneficial to the entire society. The emphasis on training leading to economic self-sufficiency was so strong and so consistent, however, as to possibly suggest some of the actual circumstances of plural marriage. As the editors wrote, "It seems to us that a very rich man who has daughters should provide for them with visions of the almshouse continually before his eyes"--perhaps a realistic preparation for a form of marriage in which women by necessity often had to contribute to their

own maintenance.¹⁰ Whatever the motivation behind this suggestions, the Exponent took a dim view of wives assuming the role of passive ornaments. Nor did the journal preach marriage for women as an absolute imperative. As one editorial remarked,

If there be some woman in whom the love of learning extinguishes all other love, then the heaven-appointed sphere of that woman is not the nursery. It may be the library, the laboratory, the observatory.¹¹

From all appearances the Exponent portrayed the women of Mormonism as reasonable and intelligent individuals, broad-minded in their interests and involvements, and as unwilling to tolerate male authoritarianism as the reformers who sought to free them from their presumably unenlightened state of degradation. It contained no evidence of the despondency, the mental inferiority, or the flagrant moral indecency or degeneracy commonly associated with Mormon womanhood. Instead, it presented them in a very positive way. However, this message implicit in the journal itself was made more direct and pointed through its editorials, which were frequently addressed specifically to the topic of Gentile misconceptions of the women of Mormonism. An undeniable purpose of the Exponent was to make the Mormon sisters more fully known to the outside world and to create a more positive and favorable image. The statement of policy drawn up in the founding phase of the journal clearly demonstrates this intent:

The women of Utah to-day occupy a position which attracts the attention of intelligent and thinking men and women everywhere.
...

¹⁰"Education and Employment of Girls," Woman's Exponent, 1 November 1872, p. 83.

¹¹"Education of Women," Woman's Exponent, 1 April 1873, p. 163.

They have been grossly misrepresented through the press, by active enemies who permit no opportunity of appealing to the intelligence and candor of their fellow countrymen and countrywomen in reply.

Who are so well able to speak for the women of Utah as the women of Utah themselves? "It is better to represent ourselves than to be misrepresented by others!"¹²

Exponent articles and editorials often made an explicit attempt to refute the popular Gentile image of womanly Zion. Debunking the myth of "woman's life in Mormon bondage" was a recurrent theme and appeared in one of the publication's earliest editorials, entitled "the 'Enslaved' Women of Utah." "Much lachrymose and silly sentimentality has been uttered and published relative to the 'enslaved' condition of the women of Utah," the article maintained, and went on to denounce "the incorrect and vindictive statements" made in regard to the women of the church: "If the women of Utah are 'slaves,' their bonds are loving ones and dearly prized."¹³ In answer to the "slave" image the spokeswomen frequently pointed out the high moral character of their community, their strong beliefs in their church's teachings, their commitment to the growth of Zion, and the opportunities available to them in education, employment, and voting. A letter of "M.J.T." of Provo offered another response to the "slave" image:

While the hardy pioneer was tilling the soil or working in the canyon, what kind of wife must it have been who would not have done her best to provide for the comfort of home? Was this slavery? Perhaps it was; but the master was stern necessity.¹⁴

¹²"Statement of Policy," Woman's Exponent, 1 January 1873, p. 120.

¹³"The 'Enslaved' Women of Utah," Woman's Exponent, 1 July 1872, p. 20.

¹⁴Letter to Editor, Woman's Exponent, 1 April 1873, p. 167.

The women contributors certainly associated themselves with a number of roles other than wife, plural or otherwise, and resented the way non-Mormons exclusively connected them with polygamy and the accompanying assortment of negative connotations.

The "harem" or "brothel" image elicited somewhat less response in the Exponent than did the "slave" image. However, the editors printed with great delight certain passages from a current book written by an Englishwoman who had traveled in the Middle East. According to this book as quoted in the Exponent, "all we are told of the imprisonment of the seraglio is a great mistake," and that a woman in a harem was treated very well and with great respect, as her husband's "'ain kind dearie'."¹⁵

If the journal was to make headway in changing the attitudes of non-Mormons, it needed to be distributed throughout the country. While it has not been possible to locate exact figures on the Exponent's circulation outside of Utah, the correspondence and comments appearing in the paper indicate that the journal was present and read elsewhere. The Exponent elicited some favorable response among eastern woman's rights and suffrage groups. Virginia Barnhurst of Philadelphia, secretary of the National Woman Suffrage Association, wrote a very kind letter to the Exponent in 1877. She gave her frank opinion that in the east the Mormon woman was considered "either an oriental dolt or a domestic drudge" and stated "may your able little Exponent do the work of disproving what I now truly believe to be erroneous in the highest degree." She also

¹⁵"Turkish Ladies," Woman's Exponent, 1 March 1876, p. 151.

enthusiastically encouraged the editors to contact Philadelphia newspapers and submit their views for publication.¹⁶

Possibly the Exponent played a role in the National Woman Suffrage Association's inclusion of Mormon delegates at their 1879 conference. That they were not included earlier seems to indicate some of the disfavor and suspicion with which the Mormon sisters were viewed. The Exponent perhaps reduced some of the suffragists' doubts concerning the virtue of Mormon women; they were no longer a strange, unknown, or unworthy group but ostensibly respectable and similar to other woman's rights advocates. However, the staid Bostonian wing of the national suffrage movement, particularly the eminent Lucy Stone, created a stir over the inclusion of the women of Deseret at the 1879 meeting, considering the organization sullied by their presence. The more liberal Elizabeth Cady Stanton, though not impressed with polygamy, retorted

If George Q. Cannon can sit in the Congress of the United States without compromising that body on the question of polygamy, I should think Mormon women might sit on our platform without making us responsible for their religious faith. If, as the husband of four wives, he can be tolerated in the Councils of the nation and treated with respect, surely the wives of only a fourth part of man should be four times as worthy of tender consideration.¹⁷

If the Mormon women could gain little favor for plural marriage, they would settle for tolerance. Emmeline Wells and Zina Young Williams traveled to Washington, D. C., for the 1879 conference, possibly anticipating a difficult and hostile reception. At this time it was a demanding task to travel east and serve as good-will emissaries of the

¹⁶ Letter to Editor, Woman's Exponent, 1 September 1877, p. 49.

¹⁷ "Mrs. Stanton and Mormon Women," Woman's Exponent, 15 May 1879, p. 240.

Mormon community, yet the two women did so in hope of conveying personally what the Exponent tried to do in print.

The journal touched the hearts and minds of some individual Gentile women not connected with suffrage groups; their encouraging letters occasionally appeared in the publication. A Mrs. Emily Scott, an eastern reader, conveyed some of the most oft-expressed sentiments. She wrote to Emmeline Wells that she was thoroughly unimpressed when she heard a lecture given by Ann Eliza Young:

I thought, well, if I had escaped from something so terrible as the papers say Mormonism is ... I would tell something! I would stamp my foot, and shake my fists at the audience ... Why two thirds of the women in her audience could have told a sadder tale of domestic woe than she related.¹⁸

She said her intuitions were confirmed when she came across a copy of the Exponent. Here were "no murders, suicides, or evil doings" but only pages "pure as the heart of a little child," "fragrant with faith in God, and love toward each other."

Thus on a minor scale the Exponent did succeed in transmitting a more favorable image of the Mormon women. It convinced some that they were individuals of character, intelligence, and high aspirations. The Exponent was not in itself strong enough to avert the powerful forces which deemed plural marriage an ill or to change the popular representation of the women as suffering victims. The Exponent was only one publication, and it ran against the voluminous and overwhelming body of books, pamphlets, and speeches expressing opposing views. Yet at the least the Exponent was an attempt to deal with the situation; its

¹⁸"Opinions of a Gentile Lady," Woman's Exponent, 15 April 1882, p. 169.

editors did not sidestep or ignore unpleasant issues but used the paper in a constructive effort to smooth discord and correct misconceptions.

In this roundabout fashion, the popular negative image of womanly Zion brought out some very admirable qualities in the women themselves. They learned journalistic self-defense but also tried to adapt the verbal self-restraint necessary for building diplomatic interchange. And since the Exponent was in part intended as a response to their defamation, it allowed the women a means through which to articulate a self-image. This identity-building process served an important function as it reinforced a pride and unity among the women of the church. While the Exponent took a stand against both the critics and avowed sympathizers of Mormon womanhood, it rallied the support of the sisters themselves under the rubric of a new image--"onward for Zion."

The Mormon women's collective response: Petitions and mass meetings.

At various times the Mormon women organized meetings and drafted resolutions in protest to anti-polygamy legislation. While the women petitioned Congress on numerous occasions, activity peaked and became widespread in Utah during three periods before 1890. The first period was during the winter of 1869-70, when the women met in opposition to the Cullom Bill. The second surge of activity was in 1878, brought on by the formation of the Anti-Polygamy Society. The third major move came in 1886, before the enactment of the Edmunds-Tucker Act. The purpose behind these efforts was to show the women's full-fledged support of plural marriage and Mormonism and their resistance to prohibitive legislation. Woman-initiated and organized, these activities were meant to counteract the belief that a forced end to polygamy would be welcomed with rejoicing on the part of the sisters. Of significance to this study

is the manner in which some of the speeches and resolutions demonstrate how the women viewed themselves and their relationship to non-Mormon attitudes. While the Gentiles attacked plural marriage with the sentimental imagery of hearth and home, the Mormon sisters stated convictions to equally heartfelt attachments their own heritage had instilled--not only to plural marriage, but to the memory of their martyred prophet, their perilous flight into the wilderness, and their ultimate desire to live in unmolested peace. In response to "in the toils," particularly its political ramifications, the women in their petitions and mass meetings expressed an image of themselves as a proud and persecuted group.

The introduction of the Cullom Bill in Congress marked the intensification of the polygamy issue after the Civil War. The bill outlawed polygamy and called for several harsh measures against the Mormon Church in Utah. At this point, the women of Utah called a meeting to protest the action. On January 14, 1870, they held a mass meeting, men not invited, at the Salt Lake Tabernacle, with estimates of attendance ranging as high as six thousand.¹⁹ The 1870 meeting was the Mormon women's first major demonstration in response to Gentile opinion, and they clearly had some vehement claims to make for themselves by this date. A committee composed of six Relief Society presidents of Salt Lake wards met and drew up a series of resolutions. A number of the women delivered impassioned addresses, that of Eliza R. Snow being the longest and most direct in confronting the major issues.

¹⁹The attendance estimate of 6000 was given in Proceedings in Mass Meeting of the Ladies of Salt Lake City to Protest against the Passage of the Cullom Bill, January 14, 1870 (Salt Lake City, 1870), printed pamphlet, in possession of the Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah. Orson Whitney (History of Utah, II, 395-6) sets the figure at about 3000.

Sister Snow remarked on the previous absence of the women's objections to being "exhibited in every shade but our true light," stating "had not our aims been of most noble and exalted character, and had we not known that we occupied a standpoint far above our traducers, we might have returned volley for volley."²⁰ Previously, Sister Snow continued, an attempt to challenge the "egregious absurdities" set forth by Gentile writers would have been "a great stoop of condescension"; but the time had arrived when "silence was no longer a virtue." She forcefully reprimanded those who "pretended that in Utah woman is held in a state of vassalage--that she does not act from choice, but by coercion." Nowhere on the face of the earth, she declared, did women have more liberty, or enjoy more "high and glorious privileges" than they did as Latter-day Saints. In a dramatic passage describing the hardships endured by the Mormons in Utah, she concluded "the women of this Church have performed and suffered what could never have been borne and accomplished by slaves." She was met with resounding applause.

While Eliza Snow's speech and those of the other remonstrants were forged in a spirit of indignation and anger at meddlesome Gentiles, they drew on another theme for support--what their experience as Mormon women meant to them. Characteristically they evoked images of handcarts, mule teams, and the deserts of Israel; they were in no temper to sacrifice their hard-won farms and homes to the whim of Gentile Babylon. None of them identified with the non-Mormon view of woman's abused position in polygamy. Probably the commotion over polygamy's "enslavement" was puzzling to women who had accepted the practice as a matter of faith and

²⁰ Eliza R. Snow's speech quoted from Millennial Star, 15 March 1870, pp. 164-5.

from custom; no doubt the Cullom Bill was also frightening as it threatened established homes and marriages. Mrs. Wilmarth East went so far as to declare:

I am thankful to-day that I have the honored privilege of being the happy recipient of one of the greatest principles ever revealed to man for his redemption and exaltation in the kingdom of God--namely, plurality of wives.²¹

One of the women's strongest objections to an anti-polygamy measure was that it tampered with their chances for the highest celestial glory.

The 1870 mass meeting caused some interest and surprise among the non-Mormon world. Finlay Anderson, correspondent of the New York Herald, reported that this had been "perhaps one of the grandest female assemblages in all history" and that "it will not be denied that Mormon women have both brains and tongues"--yet he still concluded that the "twin relic" should be eliminated.²² Although the Cullom Bill passed the House, it was defeated in the Senate, perhaps in part because of this demonstration. However, there was some independent feeling already in Congress that the proposal was overly severe.²³

After the Cullom crisis passed, the Mormon sisters continued to circulate petitions and write letters in hopes of preventing further agitation on the polygamy issue.²⁴ Increasingly the leading women of the church were taking a vocal and political stance against their

²¹ Millennial Star, 1 March 1870, p. 132.

²² Reprinted in Millennial Star, 8 March 1870, p. 151.

²³ Whitney, History of Utah, II, 408-26.

²⁴ For example, a letter from Mormon women to first lady Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant, reprinted in New York Times, 9 March 1871, p. 8; "A Petition of 22,626 Women of Utah Asking Repeal of Certain Laws," U.S., Congress, House, H. Misc. Doc. 42, 44th Cong., 1st sess., January 13, 1876.

Gentile critics. However, the formation of the Anti-Polygamy Society in Salt Lake City in November 1878 caused a swift and vigorous outburst. Approximately 1500 Mormon women gathered at the Salt Lake Theatre on November 16, and numerous other protest meetings were held across the territory in December and through January 1879.²⁵ After opening prayers and a rousing chorus of the hymn "The Standard of Zion," the Salt Lake meeting proceeded with women's testimonials and speeches similar in nature to those of the 1870 gathering.²⁶ The women continued to protest their misrepresentation in the media outside of Utah, but also offered some new arguments. They focused their attack more specifically on the self-proclaimed female good-doers, stating, as did Zina D. Young:

If they truly want to benefit and bless their sex, let them direct their labors among the many unfortunate women of the towns and cities from whence they came. ... let me tell you, my sisters, there are many good and intelligent women in our land to-day who wish their husbands were as honorable as ours.²⁷

The Mormon women appealed for understanding and sympathy to the hearts of "true women" across the country, paradoxically the same call issued by those attempting to stamp out plural marriage. The outcome of this meeting was a memorial to Congress, delivered to Washington personally by Emmeline B. Wells and Zina Young Williams.²⁸

In spite of these efforts, a stern anti-polygamy measure, the Edmunds Act, was enacted in 1882 and subsequently enforced.

²⁵ Full accounts of these proceedings are found in the Woman's Exponent, 15 November 1878 through 15 January 1879.

²⁶ Report of Woman's Mass Meeting, Salt Lake City, Woman's Exponent, 1 December 1878, pp. 97-98, 102-3.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 98.

²⁸ U.S., Congress, House, "Memorial of Women of Utah," 45th Cong., 3rd sess., 23 January 1879, Congressional Record, VIII, pt. 1, 666-7.

The unfortunate imprisonment of polygamous husbands and the uncertainties faced by their wives during this period has of course become one of the most bitter and legendary stories in Utah history, but these severe difficulties did not immediately cause the priesthood to retract its stand on plural marriage. In March 1886 two thousand Mormon sisters met in the Salt Lake Theatre, this time in a more somber and less fiery mood, to ask relief from the wrongs incurred by the enforcement of the Edmunds Act.²⁹ There were no cries against misrepresentation; "in the toils" had already done its work. The women instead humbly petitioned against a law which

has been made the means of inflicting upon the women of Utah immeasurable sorrow and unprecedented indignities, of disrupting families, of destroying homes, and of outraging the tenderest and finest feelings of human nature.³⁰

Resolutions drawn up by a representative committee were approved and transmitted to Congress.

These events did not generate new ways of viewing and describing Mormon women in non-Mormon writing, nor did they change the trend favoring restrictions on plural marriage. The mass assemblies and petitions showed that the women were capable organizers and skilled at conducting meetings. These undertakings were also spontaneous. They were too numerous and too emotional to indicate anything of the nature of forced

²⁹ U.S., Congress, Senate, "Memorial of the Mormon Women of Utah to the President and Congress of the United States," 49th Cong., 1st sess., April 6, 1886, Congressional Record, XVII, pt. 3, 3137-8.

³⁰ Memorial of the Mormon Women of Utah . . . , April 6, 1886 (Salt Lake City, 1886), printed pamphlet, in possession of Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah, p. 3.

displays conjured up by the priesthood. The process of organization was aided by the existing Relief Society structure, which involved at various levels most of the women of the church, yet the degree of political awareness and leadership exhibited by some of the sisters was most noteworthy.

Few Gentiles took into account these independently organized efforts in discussing the Mormon woman's situation. Of even less interest to most observers was what the women said of themselves. Their speeches and resolutions expressed attachment not only to plural marriage but to an entire way of life centering around a religious faith and a religious community. As did the Exponent, the mass meetings allowed the sisters a chance to build their own identity, something which might not have been so important had not the women been the focus of outsiders' discussion and controversy. In effect, the unfavorable publicity the women received in the press proved unifying as they responded by developing their own meaningful and supportive self-image.

The Mormon women's defense of plural marriage. The popular Gentile image of the Mormon women rarely depicted them as actively arguing in support of polygamy, much less took note of their arguments. Perhaps no aspects of history are more quickly forgotten than the arguments once used to defend a defeated cause; certainly the women's articulated defense of plural marriage was given little attention in its own time and has since remained a fairly obscure aspect in the history of American womanhood. The women used many of the same justifications for the practice as those set forth by the priesthood, particularly that in plural marriage they followed a divine mandate. From the Saints' point of view, it stood to reason that adherence to the divine ordinance would lead to a

happier and more spiritual life. However, the women themselves submitted several more specifically temporal rationalizations in favor of the practice, believing that polygamy offered a workable and beneficial solution to current social ills. Thus in their response to criticisms of plural marriage some of the Mormon women emerged as theoretical feminists, optimistically spinning out ideas they felt would lead to the betterment of their sex. Through a curious reversal of terms, some Mormon women thought themselves enlightened and liberated through plural marriage and their monogamous Gentile sisters the worst victims of male domination. Needless to say, Gentile imagination never conceptualized plural wives as feminists.

The Mormon women's defense of plural marriage did not develop exclusively in response to anti-polygamy legislation. As early as 1854 many of the elements of the defense had already appeared; in that year Belinda Pratt, plural wife of Elder Orson Pratt, sent a letter to an eastern friend which was virtually a classic embodiment of articulate Mormon womanhood's pro-polygamy stance, fully detailing the practice's Biblical roots and its eugenic soundness.³¹ More of this sort of material was advanced, though, as anti-polygamy feeling increased in the 1870's and 1880's.

The major social rationalization for plural marriage as claimed by the Mormon sisters was that it eliminated the double standard. Utah had no haunts of vice; all women could be respectably married and provided for, and none would be reduced to the status of courtesan or prostitute.

³¹ Reprinted in Richard F. Burton, The City of the Saints and Across the Rocky Mountains to California, ed. by Fawn M. Brodie (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), pp. 484-93.

One of the resolutions of the 1870 mass meeting stated that plural marriage was "the only reliable safeguard of female virtue and innocence," that polygamy eliminated all need for marital infidelities and covert liaisons.³² Indeed, the Mormons often used a stereotype of Gentile marriage which was almost as unfavorable as the Gentile perception of polygamy.

In addition to providing husbands, homes, and families for all--which was, in essence, what late-nineteenth century American society deemed woman's most noble and suited calling--the Mormon sisters claimed that polygamy offered them more freedom than could monogamy. As Sarah Kimball stated, the abolition of plural marriage "would deprive us, as women, of the privilege of selecting our husbands," for all men in Mormonism were available marriage prospects.³³ This feature supposedly reduced some of the pressures of the marriage market for women, as there were always plenty of eligible men. Ideally no Mormon girl need fear she would remain unmarried, nor did she need to become preoccupied with competing for a husband at the expense of developing her own individual interests.³⁴ After marriage, a husband usually divided his time between households of the various wives, so that each wife had more time to herself and more independence. As Martha Hughes Cannon told an interviewer after her election to the state senate, "If her husband has four wives, she has three weeks of freedom every single month."³⁵

³² Millennial Star, 22 February 1870, p. 115.

³³ Ibid., p. 113.

³⁴ "Woman--Woman's Worst Enemy," Woman's Exponent, 1 January 1879, p. 117.

³⁵ Jean Bickmore White, "Gentle Persuaders: Utah's First Women Legislators," Utah Historical Quarterly, 38 (Winter 1970), 45.

Instead of being victims of male licentiousness, as Gentiles thought, Mormon women said that polygamy actually freed them from masculine demands and allowed for a healthy continence. According to the Mormon women, monogamous wives were more at the mercy of their husbands:

Thousands of delicate women are united to men who show them not the least consideration--she being his "property" he can take license and she thereby becomes the most wretched of slaves.³⁶

Polygamy, on the other hand, diminished the degree to which individual women had to tolerate the male lust so dreadful to the Victorian mentality. It also allowed for continence during gestation as recommended by nineteenth century medical theory, and therefore made for healthier, better-spaced babies. In addition, women had no need to bear illegitimate children or resort to abortions, which Mormons saw as failures of the monogamous system.

Mormon spokeswomen said that plural marriage built good character. They seemed to acknowledge on this point that being a plural wife was not necessarily easy, but that it eventually improved the quality of a woman's personal outlook. According to Emmeline Wells,

the relationships and obligations of plural marriage expand the soul, and clothe it with the Christian graces of suffering, gentleness, forbearance, meekness, and above all that charity which helps one to love her neighbor as herself. ... It does not narrow, but widens woman's field for usefulness.³⁷

The practice of plural marriage hardly seems a prerequisite for developing a strong and generous nature in women, but a number of plural wives did state that this was one of the positive results. Then, again, the

³⁶ Helen Mar Whitney, Why We Practice Plural Marriage (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Press, 1884), p. 54.

³⁷ "Patriarchal Marriage," Woman's Exponent, 15 August 1877, p. 44.

Mormon women considered themselves beholden to a different set of rules. As Isabella Horne wrote, Mormon women did not selfishly stop their husbands from taking other wives because "we are not of the world, neither have we the spirit of the world, but rejoice in the spirit of the Gospel."³⁸

Few things angered the Mormon sisters more than the occasional Gentile suggestion that in fairness women should be allowed more than one husband.³⁹ This of course reversed the pattern of the patriarchal plan and its purpose of bringing optimum numbers of children into the world. The women said, moreover, that such was an utter negation, a scandalous perversion, of the natural order, for no "true woman" could ever love more than one man at one time. Helen Mar Whitney in her book-length defense of plural marriage spoke in some detail on this point, holding that man was by nature polygamous and women monogamous in affections-- "the love for one man exhausts and absorbs her whole conjugal nature: there is no room for more."⁴⁰ The spokeswomen contended that not only was polygamy justified by religious doctrine but by human nature itself.

The entire debate of polygamy versus monogamy neglected another option in feminine lifestyle--the unmarried state. Apparently no one considered this an option at all but merely an unfortunate situation. The Mormon interpretation of woman's emancipation was a system which enabled them all to marry, while Gentiles associated her emancipation with the

³⁸M. Isabella Horne, "A Short Chat with Mrs. Scott," Woman's Exponent, 15 February 1882, p. 139.

³⁹For example, see response to Abigail Scott Duniway, Woman's Exponent, 15 September 1873, p. 61.

⁴⁰Whitney, Why We Practice Plural Marriage, p. 51.

joys of monogamy. Both Gentiles and Mormons had some difficulty extricating the concept of womanhood from a marital role. In reality the single state for American women was not particularly pleasant as there were few attractive opportunities for self-support. Social pressure prohibited women from many occupational and professional fields. Many unmarried girls and women during the late-nineteenth century were forced to accept menial factory labor and a consequent life of penury.⁴¹

Mormon women claimed that busy hands always had a place in Zion, regardless whether an individual was single, married, male or female. They pointed to opportunities for woman's self-support in such fields as printing, silk culture, telegraphy, clerical and store work, teaching, nursing, and midwifery. In other words, they said they had as much, or even more, chance for gainful employment compared to Gentile women elsewhere and were not forced to marry because of economic need.⁴²

One might argue, as did Gentiles, that Mormon polygamy was no solution to the double standard of morality, that it simply institutionalized the current reality of a different sex conduct for men than for women. To state, as the Mormons did, that polygamy did away with prostitution does not, after all, speak very well for the motives for which men took plural wives. Again, the Mormon feminist theoreticians had a response. Emmeline Wells maintained,

⁴¹Eleanor Flexner, Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in America (Cambridge: Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 131.

⁴²"Memorial on Behalf of Women of Utah," in U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Education and Labor, Report on an Amendment intended to be proposed to the Sundry Civil Bill providing for an appropriation to aid in the establishment of a School in Utah ... with a view to the suppression of Polygamy Therein, S. Rept. 1279, 49th Cong., 1st sess., May 7, 1886.

girls "as might otherwise have been prostitutes" would not live in polygamy ... not because they were starved or mistreated, but because they did not possess goodness, purity, and integrity and principle enough to endure onto the end.⁴³

Such statements demonstrate the high moral worth the women associated with plural marriage, however tenuous the argument itself may seem.

The spokeswomen, then, virtually presented Mormonism as a female paradise. At one time or another, they claimed it provided everything a women could want--security, freedom, purpose, and opportunities for self-development. Their arguments in favor of plural marriage were in direct opposition to all accusations about the system's degradation and enslavement, even to the extent that one reader of the Exponent called polygamy for women "the beginning of her freedom" and "the door of her emancipation from slavery to man."⁴⁴ Their arguments did not make much headway with non-Mormons, who at most recognized the presence of a Mormon rationale, but who could not overcome the affront to conventional morality the mere presence of polygamy implied. In other ways, though, the women's formulation and circulation of a pro-polygamy stance has historical significance.

As will be recalled from an earlier chapter, the "woman question" during the last half of the nineteenth century was an unsettled issue. Much was said about woman's proper place, particularly in support of her position in the home, but the idea was surrounded by elements of uncertainty as reflected in the woman's rights movement and various domestic reform campaigns. The Mormon women's defense of plural marriage

⁴³"Why, Ah! Why," Woman's Exponent, 1 October 1874, p. 67.

⁴⁴"Woman--Woman's Worst Enemy," Woman's Exponent, 1 January 1879, p. 117.

might be interpreted as a lost chapter in this feminist search for order. They wrote and spoke at a time when woman's status was in a condition of relative flux. Conceivably these women felt they really did offer a safe and sane answer to the problem of woman's role in a changing society. Their solution, however, seemed so bizarre, so outrageous, that practically no one gave it a second thought.

Almost with a sense of anticipation of the Mormon women's defense, Margaret Fuller, America's first great feminist, wrote in 1844,

It is idle to speak with contempt of the nations where polygamy is an institution, or seraglios a custom, while practices far more debasing haunt, well-nigh fill every city and town.⁴⁵

If the Gentile concern over the Saints' polygamy is taken as it represented moral indignation and alarm, one might conclude, as did the Mormons, that the predominant culture simply refused to see its own inconsistencies and failures. But the second half of the nineteenth century was not an era given to close self-examination; as pointed out earlier, the contradictions implicit in the American woman's position were painful to recognize. Possibly the women of Zion made themselves more unpopular and invited more attack by criticizing the sensitive points in monogamy. But they only offered their arguments in response to the intensification of the Gentile drive, particularly after 1870.

Since Gentile criticism hinged on the ills of polygamy as a social system, perhaps this caused the sisters to respond in kind by pointing out certain social and personal advantages of the practice in addition

⁴⁵ Margaret Fuller Ossoli, Woman in the Nineteenth Century and Kindred Papers Relating to the Sphere, Condition, and Duties of Woman, ed. by Arthur B. Fuller (New York: The Tribune Association, 1869), p. 70.

to the religious precepts. The sisters presented a fairly reasonable case for some of the system's conveniences and practicalities as a comfortable option in feminine lifestyle. Yet Gentile commentary continued to adhere to the belief that plural marriage was imposed and strictly reinforced by the male element of Mormonism.

Conclusions. One evident conclusion concerning the Mormon women's response to "in the toils" is that their efforts had little impact in changing their image outside of Utah. The literature decrying their bondage and degradation continued to appear in even greater volume after 1870, the approximate date when the women began to publicly dispute their misrepresentation. Neither the Exponent, their petitions and mass meetings, or their defense of plural marriage captured to any marked degree the fascination of the Gentile world as polygamy had done. If such had been so, one might expect to find at least some commentators depicting the women as organizers or as able speakers and writers; these images were absent in popular literature on the Mormons.

However, it cannot be concluded that the women's response to "in the toils" was historically unimportant or irrelevant. The common circulation of the negative image of Mormon womanhood had an impact on the women of Zion themselves. In obvious ways the impact was a harmful, if not devastating one; their accepted form of marriage was done away with partly as a result of the Gentile belief that polygamy was a crime against women. Thus the women received more actual abuse from their unflattering image than from their situation itself. Yet it is also

significant to remember the many ways in which the Mormon women had tried to curb anti-polygamy measures. Indirectly, "in the toils" possibly brought some favorable results. The Gentile criticism seemed to cause the Mormon women to become more conscious of and to articulate their perceptions of themselves and their position; they built their own unique image and rejected the non-Mormon one. This was beneficial in that the sisters seemed to become more aware of their own contributing role in Mormon history. Through their advancement of testimonials and autobiographical statements they seemed to prove to themselves if to no one else that they had been integral and worthy agents in the Latter-day endeavor.

In addition, in the process of refuting Gentile beliefs, Mormon women became involved in some activities that might not have been necessary otherwise. In responding to non-Mormon attitudes, the women drew on and improved such skills as self-expression, organization, and handling activities without male assistance. They developed an awareness of current affairs and the operation of the political system. These skills may have developed had there been no controversy, but controversy brought them to the fore. Gentile slander served as the stimulus which caused a number of the women to become more fully involved in public life. It could be noted that several of the women who had tried to improve public relations and had served as representatives of the sisters during the years of conflict--most notably Emmeline B. Wells and Ellen Ferguson--later were quite active in state political affairs. It appears that they wanted to continue the political role for which they had been thoroughly prepared.

Yet probably the most outstanding feature of the women's response to their negative image was that their attempts were so conscientiously made against such overwhelming odds. They did not have the financial resources that were available to the Protestant mission societies, national reform groups, eastern publishers, and the other interests which sponsored the extensive anti-polygamy literature. Apparently the Mormon Church was unwilling or unable to subsidize the type of large-scale opinion-shaping endeavors engaged in by the opposition. The Saints seemed to feel that there was a certain indignity and self-effacement attached to efforts of this type. It is to the credit of the Mormon sisters that they took upon themselves as much as they did in efforts to remake their image and gain support, especially in what must have often seemed like a discouraging battle.

CHAPTER V

"IN THE TOILS": DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE, 1852-1890

The previous chapters of this study have demonstrated that between 1852 and 1890 a particular depiction, or image, of the women of Mormonism was very common in Gentile writings, and that this image was neither especially representative of the total picture of the women's lives or responsive to the contrary assertions of the women themselves. This suggests the wide gap between the two perspectives created by the practice of plural marriage, the crux of the image. It also indicates that the non-Mormon view developed more internally and of itself rather than by any process of interplay which gave serious consideration to the arguments voiced by the Saints. The Mormons were not convinced that they were doing anything wrong in plural marriage; the offensive rested with the Gentiles, who were equally convinced that the practice was a debasement of the female sex and a blight upon the national conscience. The outsiders' image of the women reflected as well as created a growing sentiment in this direction.

The "in the toils" image was a continuing thread in Gentile commentary throughout the entire period, but it is possible to identify certain chronological shifts in the character of the image, the type of literature in which it appeared, and the ways in which it was used. This final chapter will clarify some of these elements of change, roughly corresponding to decade. As the image matured, and its expression grew more shrill, many of its perpetrators also became less tolerant of anything but a forced end to the bondage of Mormon womanhood. However, this

culminating drive drew upon, and perhaps would have been unsuccessful without, a rhetoric of imagery that had begun to gel even in the early 1850's.

The 1850's: The formative period of "In the Toils." The women of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints did not receive much particular or widespread attention before the announcement of plural marriage in 1852. Prior to this date, however, the Mormons in general were held in low repute as an un-Christian and perverse sect, attitudes reflected in both written sources and active and violent persecution. Throughout the 1830's and 1840's Protestant clergymen prepared numerous tracts on the sinister nature of Mormonism, and by the late 1840's this unfavorable representation had begun to filter into current fiction.¹ Scandalous rumors concerning polygamy began to spread during the Nauvoo period, in large part because of the exposé written in 1842 by John C. Bennett, an ex-Mormon expelled from the church because of his own sexual misconduct. Bennett's fabricated account described the operations of a huge Mormon seraglio in which any man had free access to any female of his choice--probably the first work to develop the idea of Mormon womanhood as an abused class.² After the public announcement of plural marriage this view became typical as anti-Mormon sentiment came to center specifically on polygamy. Discussion of and interest in Mormon women

¹ Leonard J. Arrington and Jon Haupt, "The Missouri and Illinois Mormons in Ante-Bellum Fiction," Dialogue, A Journal of Mormon Thought, V (Spring 1970), 37-50.

² John C. Bennett, The History of the Saints, or an Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism (Boston: Leland and Whiting, 1842); David Brion Davis, "Some Themes of Counter-Subversion: An Analysis of Anti-Masonic, Anti-Catholic, and Anti-Mormon Literature," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLVII (September 1960), 219-20.

not only became more common in Gentile commentary after 1852 but formed the guiding theme of entire books.

Several insights on the status of published literature on the Mormons during the 1850's may be derived from the comprehensive annotated bibliography Richard Burton compiled during his visit to Utah in 1860.³ According to Burton's list not only was there a large body of literature by this date, both in America and abroad, but most of it was negative, with "the Cons more than trebling the Pros." He cited ten works he considered unprejudiced and which gave what he considered a fairly realistic appraisal of Mormon society. Most of these were travel accounts, including those by John Gunnison, William Chandless, and Jules Remy and Julius Brenchley. Under the category "anti-Mormon" he gave a long list of exposés, histories, periodical articles, ministers' polemics, and fictional works. By its volume and content, this latter group was the more significant for establishing the subjective and negative image of the women of the church.

To illustrate, eminent national periodicals of the 1850's, generally regarded by the public as credible and serious sources of information, gave an almost totally negative description of polygamy.⁴ Moreover, many of the periodical articles of this period were fired with the

³ Richard F. Burton, The City of the Saints and Across the Rocky Mountains to California, ed. by Fawn M. Brodie (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), pp. 225-39 (note).

⁴ For further discussion and bibliography see Richard Olsen Cowan, "Mormonism in National Periodicals" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1961), pp. 25-38; Dennis Leo Lythgoe, "The Changing Image of Mormonism in Periodical Literature" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Utah, 1969), pp. 23-44.

language of intense hatred and moral disgust which deemed Mormon womanhood a depraved and indecent lot. For example, the New Englander, a public issues journal, decried the Mormon "Blue Beards," their "company of harlots," and the "indecent concubinage ... fostered, unparalleled, except among the incestuous devotees of Moloch."⁵ Mrs. Benjamin Ferris's work, described earlier for its "prostitute" depiction of the women, was serialized in Putnam's in 1855.⁶ Periodicals at this time also linked the Mormon woman's position to that of the Islamic harem inmate; most agreed that her position "under the abused name of wife" was "a humiliating and disgusting step back into worse than Turkish barbarism."⁷ Other periodicals chastised only the Mormon men, the despoilers of innocent and flower-like feminine victims.⁸ Thus the "depraved" view, the "harem" view, and the "unfortunate victim" image of the women were all present in periodicals of the 1850's.

Almost all of the most famous anti-Mormon novels were published in the 1850's, most of them written by New England authoresses and some of them going through many editions and translations before and after

⁵W. T. Eustis, "Utah and the Mormons," New Englander, XII (November 1854), 567, 569.

⁶Mrs. B. G. Ferris, "Life Among the Mormons," Putnam's Monthly Magazine, VI (1855); published the following year as The Mormons at Home (New York: Dix and Edwards).

⁷S. G. Bullfinch, "The Mormons," Christian Examiner, LXIV (May 1858), 438.

⁸For example, the short story "The Mormon's Wife," Putnam's Monthly Magazine, V (June 1855), 641-9.

the Civil War.⁹ As noted earlier, the content of these works drew to a large extent on suffering female heroines, thus heightening both an awareness of polygamy and its insidious effects upon women. Novels seem to have been one of the major circulating sources of information, or misinformation, about the Mormons during the 1850's, and were probably very important for early implanting in the public mind all the fearsome horror stories about the practice. The anti-Mormon novel as a literary form was ever-popular throughout the late nineteenth century, but most works of following decades were patterned after the antebellum ones with their typically agonized and tortured Mormon wives.

Several explanations might be offered for this unduly harsh criticism of plural marriage during the 1850's and the high level of interest in the system's female "victims." Abolitionist sentiment as one of the consuming passions of the decade had direct carry-overs into attitudes toward Mormon women, even if any association with slavery was one of imagination. After the public announcement of plural marriage, the

⁹Orvilla S. Belisle, The Prophets; or, Mormonism Unveiled (Philadelphia, 1855); [Maria Ward], Female Life Among the Mormons: A Narrative of Many Years' Personal Experience, by the Wife of a Mormon Elder, Recently from Utah (New York, 1855, 1856, 1857, 1858, 1860; London, 1855; Paris, 1856; Leipzig, 1856; Weimer, 1857; numerous other editions published in other languages and under other titles; Metta V. Fuller Victor, Mormon Wives: A Narrative of Facts Stranger Than Fiction (New York, 1856, 1858), also published as Lives of Female Mormons (Philadelphia, 1859, 1860; New York, 1860); Alfreda Eva Bell, ed., Boadicea, The Mormon Wife: Life-Scenes in Utah (Baltimore, 1855); Nelson Winch Green, Fifteen Years Among the Mormons: Being the Narrative of Mrs. Ettie V. Smith (New York, 1858). See Leonard Arrington and Jon Haupt, "Intolerable Zion: The Image of Mormonism in Nineteenth Century American Literature," Western Humanities Review, 22 (Summer 1968), 243-60, for description and complete bibliography.

Mormon woman's position was almost immediately linked to that of the Negro slave. Both were presumed to be captives of inescapable power structures and barbaric customs. Slavery had been an issue long before polygamy; one was actual bondage, causing the other "twin relic" to take on more serious and threatening overtones. By the end of the decade both polygamy and slavery came to be viewed as similar reform movements. On the eve of the Civil War, Metta Fuller Victor introduced her book Lives of Female Mormons with fervent pleas to liberate the victims of both forms of tyranny and injustice.¹⁰ The image of Mormon woman as slave remained both a literary and reformist symbol, however, long after the end of the Civil War.

Another influence on the early development of "in the toils" in the 1850's was the coinciding evolution of the domestic novel. This literary form had been a new and exciting one in the 1830's and 1840's but by 1850 the familiar plot lines involving good, redeeming wives and their straying husbands seem to have been wearing somewhat thin by repetition.¹¹ Novelists sought new materials and settings but left intact the basic message of the virtues of domesticity. For example, Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin, first published in 1852, revolved around the theme of slavery's terrible impact upon Negro family ties. By the late 1850's, many domestic novels and manuals had ventured near the

¹⁰ Metta V. Fuller Victor, Lives of Female Mormons (New York: D. W. Evans and Company, 1860), pp. iii-xii.

¹¹ James D. Hart, The Popular Book: A Study of America's Literary Taste (3d ed.; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), pp. 106-17; E. Douglas Branch, The Sentimental Years, 1836-1860 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1965), pp. 220-1; Mary Patricia Ryan, "American Society and the Cult of Domesticity, 1830-1860" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1971), pp. 295-343.

pornographic, injecting new elements of interest while still maintaining the outward veneer of proffering simple home values. The announcement of polygamy coincided with the need for different subject material in this yet-popular but lagging literary form. The Mormon woman's position as plural wife suggested fresh avenues for fictional pursuit. Novelists' pecuniary motives and imagination worked together to the exclusion of the evidence that could have supported a different variety of female Mormon prototypes.

A third important influence on the development of "in the toils" in the 1850's was the geographical remoteness of the Mormons themselves. The announcement of polygamy created an almost instant sensation yet first-hand observation and reporting were difficult to obtain. A noteworthy feature of Burton's list of anti-Mormon works was the large number written by people who had had little or no direct observation of the Saints. Surely this was true of the novelists and many of the clergymen of the eastern states and Britain. It is fairly clear that many of these non-observing critics drew their attack from the resources of their own attitudes and speculations in attempts to meet and capitalize on the public demand for information.

Other interested parties sought information from accounts of those who had been to Utah. This carried its own dangers as there were no available standards by which to assess veracity. Thus a book review of 1854 on Benjamin Ferris's inflammatory Utah and the Mormons praised the author's objectivity, considered the work to bear "internal evidence for its trustworthiness" and thought it "a valuable addition to our stock of knowledge."¹² The early image of the Mormons and Mormon women therefore

¹²Eustis, "Utah and the Mormons," p. 554.

serves as a demonstration of how lack of information can create an issue as much as, if not more so, than the presence of information itself.

New York editor Horace Greeley's visit to Utah in 1859 represented an attempt to remedy this situation. His account of the Mormons, printed in the New York Tribune, was for the most part exceptional for its accuracy and lack of prejudice compared to other journalistic accounts of the 1850's. Yet sensitive and supportive as Greeley personally was to the eastern woman's rights movement, he contributed to the "oppression" image of Mormon women, strengthening rather than changing it.

Thus several basic characteristics of the "in the toils" image during the 1850's are evident. First, an extensive body of literature on the Mormons developed, the most widely circulated of which were unfavorably biased and over-emotional in their portrayal of Mormon women. Second, all the major variations of the Gentile image of the women appeared--the "depraved" view, the "harem" view, the "oppressed" view, the "slave" view, the "sensationalized" literary view, and a developing "reformist" view to rescue the downtrodden plural wives. Third, "in the toils" in its formative period was predicated on a lack of reliable first-hand information. As will be seen, later commentaries tended to draw on and reinforce these stereotypes rather than attempt to penetrate them and reconstitute them. During the 1850's, then, Gentile writers affixed certain attitudes and perceptions to the concept of Mormon womanhood and set patterns and conventions as to how the women were to be later thought of and verbally depicted. Writers during this period set the groundwork for the later political movement by building a general awareness of the polygamy issue.

The 1860's: "In the Toils" image reinforced. During the early 1860's the Civil War dominated the media and arenas of public discussion, but the image of the Mormon women continued to develop by way of a number of first-hand travel accounts of the West and Utah written by well-known public figures. An impressive array of distinguished authors, journalists, and political leaders traveled to Utah in the 1860's. British scholar and adventurer Richard Burton arrived in 1860, Mark Twain in 1861, followed in 1863 by New York literary critic and writer Fitz Hugh Ludlow and in 1865 by popular humorist Artemus Ward. In 1865 a party including Samuel Bowles, a Massachusetts editor, Schuyler Colfax, Speaker of the House and future Vice President, and Albert D. Richardson of the New York Tribune, traveled to Utah. Alexander McClure of Pennsylvania, newspaper editor and national Republican Party leader, visited the Saints in the late 1860's, as did Englishman William Hepworth Dixon, world traveler and editor of the prominent London Athenaeum. All of these individuals published their observations of Mormon society, and all indicated a desire to learn about and describe the much-publicized Mormon women.

While travel accounts of the 1850's--for example, those by Carvalho, Remy, Chandless, and the Ferrises--had shown some diversity in their discussion of the women, those of the 1860's were more similar to each other, with the outstanding exception of Burton's City of the Saints. This indicates almost a crystallization of both anti-Mormon sentiment and the Gentile stereotype of Mormon women.¹³ This uniformity also seems

¹³ For further discussion of the travel accounts of the 1860's see Edwina Jo Snow, "Singular Saints: The Image of the Mormons in Book Length Travel Accounts, 1847-1857" (unpublished Master's thesis, The George Washington University, 1972), pp. 129-32.

to correspond with the development of a more definite political policy to deal with the Mormons; at least by the end of the decade such a trend had begun to firm up both within Utah and on the national level.

The visitors of the 1860's wrote their travel accounts for a variety of reasons other than pure intellectual curiosity. Editors McClure and Bowles carried on in the same vein as Horace Greeley had earlier done in advising, "Go West, young man"; many of their comments were directed to the economic possibilities of the West and its potentials for business and investment. The Mormon contribution to western development was certainly of interest, but all visitors were anxious to inform the world of the workings of Mormon polygamy. This subject had always proved to be well-received copy and each visitor of the 1860's took up the discussion. Some of the eastern visitors had definite political aspirations and adapted in their letters to their home newspapers the sufficiently self-righteous and indignant tone toward polygamy sure to gain support for themselves as upstanding defenders of those praised American ideals--womanhood and the home. The visitors of the 1860's indicate signs of writing for an audience, whether to influence opinion or to relate what they felt their readers would like to be told. To a man, they condemned polygamy and its degradation of women, as if to depart from this standard would place their own reputation in jeopardy.

These travelers all had similar methods of observing Mormon society. Each stayed in Utah only a short length of time, and they generally spent most of their time in Salt Lake City. They often tended to quickly generalize, and as probably is the case with most travelers anywhere, they tended to take note of the unusual rather than the ordinary.

A number of these visitors had interviews with Brigham Young and were entertained by high officials of the church. As these men usually had more wives than most Mormons, visitors seemed to get the impression that all Mormon families were in the order of large harems. Most of these visitors described their preconceptions of life in Utah, making statements to the effect that plural marriage was not as awful as they had heard. Most sought to revise the "depravity" view, stating that the practice was not chaotically immoral but adhered to certain principles and guidelines. However, even though they found that polygamy operated systematically, they felt that the women were definitely on the losing side.

The travel accounts on the Mormons during the 1860's added some new elements to "in the toils" not present in works of the 1850's. As first-hand observers the travelers described the women's appearance, character, social involvements, and attitudes as other commentators could not, but for the most part the visitors did not use this opportunity in a very provocative or creative way. As pointed out in Chapter I, the travelers all described the women as homely, dreary, dejected, cloistered, and unhappy and said they were treated like servants or sexual slaves. All of these characteristics were attributed to polygamy; no one sought other interpretations or explanations. Most travelers described attending Mormon social events such as dances, concerts or dinners; in all of these situations the women acted in a timid and passive manner in comparison to what the travelers had been accustomed to expect in women. Moreover, visitors objected to what they felt were disturbing undertones in these social events, namely, that men were

searching for additional wives. In fact, basically the only thing about Mormon women visitors thought distinguishing and worth mentioning was their utter subordination to men.

The visitors' comments on polygamy itself were also of a type, emphasizing the barbarity of the practice and its perversion of the domestic sphere and Christian mores. Travelers of the 1860's were generally much more incensed over polygamy than the antebellum visitors to Utah had been, with the exception of the detached Burton and the sardonic Mark Twain. By the time Twain published Roughing It in 1872, the travel account of the Mormons, with its characteristic description of the women, was such a convention that it provided ripe material for satirical lampoons.

While the travelers of the 1860's were reporting evidence that woman's degradation in Utah was indeed real, this supposition gained the endorsement of medical theory. In December 1860 the New Orleans Academy of Science met and debated the scientific merits of a paper entitled "The Depravity of the Offspring among the Polygamy of the Mormons."¹⁴ This paper, prepared by Dr. Samuel Cartwright, a Texas physician, discussed the development of a distinct and inferior Mormon race, whose members were characterized by "salient facial angles, low and retreating foreheads, thick lips, green areola about the eyes, gelatinous or albuminous constitutions" and a general condition of physical and mental debility. All of these appalling features Dr. Cartwright attributed to

¹⁴ Dr. Samuel A. Cartwright, "Hereditary Descent; or, Depravity of Offspring of Polygamy among the Mormons," De Bow's Review, XXX (January 1861), 206-16.

the debasement of the female sex in polygamy. Females in polygamy, he stated, underwent a "deadening of the moral sense" naturally endowed in the "white, Adamic" woman and became "coarse and masculine in their nature" through performing the severe labor and drudgery imposed upon them by their male captors. In essence, he said, polygamous wives were "reduced by the stronger sex to the virtual condition of negroes."

Scientific arguments as to the Negro's innate racial inferiority had long been used in southerners' defense of slavery and were no doubt well-known, no less advanced, by many members of the New Orleans Academy. While Cartwright kept the focus of his study on the Mormons, he was clearly a proponent of Negro slavery as it meant the noblest elevation of the white woman. He concluded by paying tribute to the life of leisure and adoration bestowed upon the southern white woman by monogamy and the slave system. She was released from heavy labor while

Negroes glory in such employment, and hence ... our Southern States, which are founded upon the true scientific principles and the fitness of things, impose the drudgery work upon the negroes, as most able to perform it, instead of making negroes of their wives and daughters.

While the Mormon woman was often compared to a slave, here the parallel was extended to establish her actual inferiority as analagous to the black race.

During the 1860's, then, the most important development of the "in the toils" image was its ostensible verification through the accounts of eminent visitors. Medical evidence as to the truth of the women's physical debilitation and genetic weaknesses also began to

appear and became another aspect of "in the toils" in later decades.¹⁵ While none of the travelers used the metaphors of the Mormon woman's "slavery" and "prostitution" in the grossly overextended manner and tone as commentators and novelists of the 1850's had done, they professed that her "oppression" was a real and substantive social problem. The travelers were prone to misinterpretation and inaccurate generalizations in their observation due to their short-term visits. None of the travelers, except Burton and possibly Twain, looked very deeply into the attitudes of the women themselves toward plural marriage nor did they attempt to establish new, more realistic images such as "pioneer" or religiously-dedicated "celestial wife." Few of the visitors were content to simply noncommittally observe and describe. As with earlier accounts, the travelers of the 1860's continued to contribute their own sizeable input of values and opinions on the matter of discussion. After the Civil War, when the national concern over polygamy resumed, these observations of these figures served to lend credibility to the need for a reform.

The 1870's: "In the Toils" image activated. The development of the "in the toils" image of Mormon women during the 1870's was in several ways associated with a major historical event--the arrival of the railroad in Utah in 1869. Some moderate observers elsewhere in the country felt that the railroad would work as an agent of civilization and would

¹⁵ For example, J. H. Beadle, "Social Experiments in Utah," Popular Science Monthly, IX (August 1876), 479-90, used the medical arguments. Theodore Schroeder, famous late-nineteenth century psychologist, also developed medical theories on the Mormons and polygamy's effects upon women; see Sidney Ditzion, Marriage, Morals, and Sex in America: A History of Ideas (New York: Bookman Associates, 1953), pp. 215-20.

open the eyes of the Mormon sisters, causing them to strike a blow on their own behalf.¹⁶ Presumably, they would desire to share the revered status and pampering accorded to the monogamous wives they would surely meet once Utah became a stopping point on the transcontinental line. However, while some observers were waiting to see the results of this advent of civilization, the railroad also brought more Gentiles to the territory who saw in polygamy a means to influence opinion and thereby gain political and legislative curbs on the church's control in Utah.¹⁷ These individuals, particularly through the Gentile press, fed the image of the downtrodden Mormon wives and kept it alive. The railroad also literally provided a means of escape for some actually disgruntled plural wives. The two most famous women apostates, Fanny Stenhouse and Ann Eliza Young, departed from Utah in the 1870's, making broad-swath eastern lecture tours and writing books which caused plural marriage to stink in the nostrils of the nation. So while there was some moderation and restraint among thoughtful commentators during the 1870's, the image of the oppressed Mormon woman gained more frequent and intense expression among

¹⁶ Lythgoe, "Changing Image," pp. 40-41.

¹⁷ The development of the conflict between Mormon and Gentile in Utah has always been one of the major themes in nineteenth century Utah history. All of the following book-length studies deal with this problem: Orson Whitney, History of Utah (4 vols.; Salt Lake City: George O. Cannon and Sons, Publisher, 1892-1904), vols. II and III; Klaus J. Hansen, Quest for Empire: The Political Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty in Mormon History (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1970); Gustive O. Larson, The "Americanization" of Utah for Statehood (San Marino, Cal.: Huntington Library, 1971); Robert J. Dwyer, The Gentile Comes to Utah: A Study in Religious and Social Conflict (1862-1890) (2d ed., rev.; Salt Lake City: Western Epics, 1971).

Utah-based Gentiles and was actively publicized in circles elsewhere. During this decade, anti-polygamy feeling took on more formal organization as a political and reformist cause.

The Gentile press in Utah, especially the Salt Lake Daily Tribune, made full use of all the variations of the image of the Mormon woman in efforts to arouse sentiment on the issue. They most often, however, invoked the prevalent womanly ideal in their writings. In a manner typical of anti-Mormon journalism of the territory, the Salt Lake Daily Reporter announced,

Polygamy has taken woman from her true position as the presiding deity of the household, the queen of the affections, the head of domestic happiness and made her an instrument, a plaything or a slave. We hold that woman should have no rival in the domestic government, there she should reign supreme, and she who admits a rival there submits to her own degradation.¹⁸

The Gentile press claimed to report what polygamy was like, seeking out and playing up instances of abused women and children. But these newspapers also devoted considerable copy to describing what polygamy, and women therein, lacked in comparison to the monogamous ideal. This dual thrust--an exaggeration of the practice's effects and an emphasis on its conflict with valued mores--is indicative of the classic propagandist attack. The interplay of these two features was not as marked or as direct in writings of earlier decades. While always implicit, during the 1870's the various arguments concerning polygamy's destruction of the womanly ideal were thrust into bold relief.

¹⁸Salt Lake Daily Reporter, 28 October 1868.

The arrival of the railroad as it allowed increased accessibility did not change the aura of mystery and evil which had earlier surrounded the Latter-day Saints. At least, writers were unwilling to abandon their customary forms of representing both male and female Saints. An article in the Overland Review in 1871 described how in "the midst of an echoless, voiceless sea of sand and awful stillness," against the backdrop of "the glimmer of a pulseless sea" the Mormons gave word to "the mysterious mandate, the fulfillment of which has shocked the world from centre to circumference."¹⁹ Expressions of the harem theme as suggested here were still frequent. The "slave" image was even more pronounced. Ann Eliza Young dedicated her famous autobiography to the suffering plural wives of Utah, a work published in 1876 under the elaborate title Wife No. 19; or, The Story of a Life in Bondage, Being a Complete Exposé of Mormonism, and Revealing the Sorrows, Sacrifices and Sufferings of Women in Polygamy. Hardly being a "complete" exposé, this work was essentially one long invective against Brigham Young. However, the book was a best-seller and contributed to the growing inclination by the end of the decade to legislatively force Mormon conformity.

As noted earlier, during the 1870's the Mormon sisters themselves entered into the debate in efforts to give their own position. Their attempts did not check the rising opinion that polygamy had to go. The granting of woman suffrage in 1870 as a noteworthy event of the decade might have been expected to influence their image as enslaved and en-fettered, as the vote could potentially be used to achieve liberation.

¹⁹ Mrs. Thomas Fitch, "The Mahomet of the West," Overland Review, VII (September 1871), 235.

However, when women used the vote in support of the men, woman suffrage was instead used to strengthen the idea of their bondage. Here, said critics, was sure proof of the total domination of the men; the women were too afraid and too ignorant to make their true beliefs felt, thus demonstrating their crying need for outside assistance. The Salt Lake Daily Tribune claimed woman suffrage was a shrewd move on the part of the priesthood to increase the Mormon electorate, that plural wives were so many "bought votes," and that illegal procedures such as marked ballots and the voting of underage girls resulted at the polls.²⁰ As early as 1873 a movement began to develop for the repeal of the Utah woman suffrage act. The argument ran that if the women would not help themselves they certainly must be deluded and immoral, therefore not fit to vote.²¹

The Gentile response to woman suffrage demonstrates some of the basic trends in the image of the Mormon woman in the 1870's. First, their image fell into patterns already established in spite of increased contact and various events which might have caused their image to change or broaden. Second, the "in the toils" image was retained and circulated as it provided an effective propagandist device for anti-Mormons in Utah.

²⁰Ralph Lorenzo Jack, "Woman Suffrage as an Issue in the Mormon and Non-Mormon Press of the Territory, 1870-1887" (unpublished Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1954), p. 27.

²¹Suffragists elsewhere voiced strong objections to the injustice of revoking woman's vote in Utah. They argued that the franchise should be retained in hopes that the women would end polygamy themselves. For example, the New York Woman Suffrage Association petitioned Congress in 1873 in opposition to the women's disenfranchisement, stating the women of Utah themselves would be "a powerful aid in doing away with the horrible institution of polygamy. Women are the principle sufferers from this cruel custom, and it is unjust to deprive them of a voice in its suppression." U.S., Congress, House, "Suffrage in Utah: Memorial of the New York Woman Suffrage Society," House Misc. Doc. 95, 42d Cong., 3d sess., February 17, 1873.

Thus the image came to take on a new identity and functional purpose in itself, becoming even more detached from the entity which it purportedly described. Previously the image had functioned as a type of projection of Gentiles' speculation and their disdain for polygamy. By the end of the 1870's, the image was being churned out daily by Gentile presses as an active opinion-shaping tool. The following decade bore the fruits of this endeavor as the publicity spread and the anti-polygamy cause gained support on a national level.

The 1880's: Crusade to end "woman's life in Mormon bondage." The 1880's was the decade of the great anti-polygamy crusade. By this time the image of the oppressed, enslaved plural wife was fully developed, with few new twists appearing in literature on the Mormons. However, a new type of writing appeared--reformist works which dealt specifically with women's problems in polygamy and voiced uncompromising appeals for legislative measures. The volume of writings dealing with Mormon women also increased tremendously, surpassing the previous large outcropping of the 1850's. The rabid tone of most works of the 1880's was also similar but even more fanatical than that appearing in the literature of the 1850's. In the 1880's, though, the women were less commonly called depraved, while the moral outrage was aimed more specifically at their polygamous husbands. Some moderation appeared in travel accounts as several visitors to Utah reacted against the blatant misrepresentation of the Mormons. However, many people throughout the country were heartily opposed to polygamy and were convinced that deliberate reform measures were necessary.

The interest in the women of polygamy during this decade is evident from the titles of numerous works. Fanny Stenhouse's An Englishwoman

in Utah, an expanded version of her previous works, appeared in 1880. Mrs. Cornelia Paddock, activist Utah Gentile, wrote her trilogy of pseudo-historical works on Mormon women at this time--In the Toils (1879); The Fate of Madame La Tour, a Tale of Great Salt Lake (1881); and Saved at Last from the Mormons (1881). The reading demand for Madame La Tour was so great that its publisher ran a second edition of 100,000 copies.²² In 1882 the Anti-Polygamy Society of Utah, composed largely of Gentile women, wrote and sponsored a reformist work, The Women of Mormonism; or, the Story of Polygamy as Told by the Victims Themselves. The Society's Anti-Polygamy Standard, published monthly in Salt Lake between 1880 and 1883, similarly dwelt on the suffering Mormon wives. The all-out campaign in printed material was accompanied by the efforts of Protestant missionaries in Utah who traveled east and informed congregations and church societies on the plight of the Mormon wives.²³ These efforts all produced strong support for the reform.

The image of the enslaved Mormon woman was directed at new groups of people. There was a more forceful drive to involve women specifically in the crusade. One eastern reformer even called for a world-wide movement of all women, pleading for the day when the mothers of England would rise

and every city, town, and village throughout the kingdom shall take up the cause of the oppressed, and petition Parliament to put a stop to the vile traffic in the dishonor of English maidens, and allow no more Mormon victims to leave her shores to swell the dens and lairs of a cruel and crafty sensualism²⁴

²²Larson, "Americanization," p. 56.

²³For discussion of activities of Protestant ministers within and outside of Utah, see Dwyer, Gentile Comes to Utah, pp. 151-189.

²⁴William Dallin, True Mormonism, or the Horrors of Polygamy, by an Ex-Mormon Elder (Chicago: William Dallin and Company, 1885), pp. 34-5.

While plural marriage had earlier been linked with the anti-slavery cause, in the 1880's it was tied to new social problems. The Mormon woman's condition was discussed as a social disgrace and polygamy a threat to the social order. The national Woman's Christian Temperance Union supported an end to polygamy in addition to the saloon, both considered threats to the home and woman's right to a decent, devoted mate.²⁵ An eastern minister connected plural marriage with another threat to woman's position, claiming "the general government is the only broom, big enough, and strong, to 'sweep' the twin monsters, MORMON POLYGAMY, AND EASY DIVORCE, into the gulf of oblivion."²⁶ Another writer, reflecting the nativist bias of the time, called for an end to polygamy through immigration restriction, asserting that the practice was perpetuated through "the ingress of foreign women"--"a low, ignorant peasant class."²⁷ Thus the major reformist movements of the 1880's looked to each other for mutual support. Similarly they rallied around common goals, such as upholding the moral integrity of marriage, preserving the respected name of womanhood, and fostering the traditional values of American life--all of which seemed to be in terrible straits as far as these reformers could see. Polygamy was part of this cluster of perceived social problems during the 1880's and gained more coverage through the association.

²⁵ See introduction by Frances Willard, W.C.T.U. president, to The Women of Mormonism; or, The Story of Polygamy as Told by the Victims Themselves, ed. by Jennie Froiseth (2d ed.; Detroit: C. G. G. Paine, 1886).

²⁶ Rev. Ballard S. Dunn, The Twin Monsters: And How National Legislation May Help to Solve the Mormon Problem, and Restore to Society Somewhat of the Sacramental Character of the Rite of Holy Matrimony (3d ed.; New York: James Pott and Company, Publishers, 1886), p. 22.

²⁷ "A Radical Remedy for Polygamy," Nation, XXXVII (December 20, 1883), 503.

On the other hand, a number of travelers to Utah in the 1880's saw a variety of qualities in Mormon women that had not previously been discussed. Their accounts indicate some willingness to break out of the earlier unfavorable stereotypes. British newspaper correspondent Phil Robinson was enchanted with the simplicity and vivacity of the Mormon girls and women he encountered in his journey through Utah in 1882. He also gave a favorable, though somewhat tongue-in-cheek rendering of the Woman's Exponent.²⁸ Another English traveler, Lady Duffus Hardy, called them "grave, earnest women, strong in the faith they have been brought up in."²⁹ Western authoress Helen Hunt Jackson, writing in Century Magazine in 1884, gave them a very kind and generous appraisal, noting the "privations and woes they endured in the old conflicts and emigrations":

It has been customary to hold them as disreputable women, light and loose, unfit to associate with the virtuous, undeserving of any esteem. Never was a greater injustice committed.³⁰

None of these observers, however, thought plural marriage of any particular virtue, each feeling that the practice was hard on the women. Jackson called the Edmunds Act "a wise step, as an expression of the general sentiment of the country in regard to polygamy."³¹ So at least among some moderates in the 1880's, there was a recognition and even

²⁸ Phil Robinson, Sinners and Saints: A Tour Across the States, and Around Them with Three Months among the Mormons (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1883), pp. 103-9.

²⁹ Lady Duffus Hardy, Through Cities and Prairie Lands: Sketches of an American Tour (Chicago: Belford, Clarke and Company, 1882), p. 109.

³⁰ Helen Hunt Jackson, "The Women of the Bee-Hive," Century Magazine, XXVIII (May 1884), 120.

³¹ Ibid., p. 122.

admiration of the Mormon women's contributions to the pioneering process and some movement toward a more positive image. Yet plural marriage still stood in the path toward full and unqualified acceptance.

The federal anti-polygamy laws of the 1880's were harsh ones and assiduously enforced. In the final years covered in this study, the image of the oppressed plural wives, translated into their need for help, was embodied in the creation of a singular benevolent institution. Crusading Gentiles in the early 1880's remained firm in their belief that the wives would leave their miserable domestic situations in droves if only given the chance; thus a realistic alternative had to be offered. Also, anti-polygamy measures were expected to create a large class of refugee plural wives with no means of support. They would, in effect, become wards of the state, their welfare a matter of civic responsibility. A new idea began to germinate for a means to liberate and aid the captive, unfortunate wives. Gentiles in Utah gathered in 1886 and drew up plans for a home to shelter them. Known as the Industrial Christian Home, this accommodation was intended as a refuge and rehabilitation center where plural wives could escape from their husbands and learn vocational skills leading to self-support.³²

In May 1886 Angie Newman, official representative of the Industrial Christian Home Association of Utah, secured a hearing before the Senate Committee on Education and Labor and submitted a request for \$100,000.

³² For more details see Jeanette Ferry, The Industrial Christian Home Association of Utah (Salt Lake City: Salt Lake Lithographing Company, 1893); Gustive O. Larson, "An Industrial Home for Polygamous Wives," Utah Historical Quarterly, 38 (Summer 1970), 263-75; Dwyer, Gentile Comes to Utah, 205-14.



DESPAIR.

Figure 7. Illustration of the need for a refuge; a scene from Fanny Stenhouse's An Englishwoman in Utah.*

Testifying to the need for the home, Mrs. Newman claimed

the primal effect of polygamous life is to build prison walls about its victims whose ponderous gates never swing outward except to crush the hand that tampers with the locks.³³

Armed with Fanny Stenhouse's Tell It All, she continued her emotion-ridden delivery by running the full gamut of variations of "in the toils." While it was true, she said, that the Edmunds Act was taking effect, she

³³ U. S., Senate, Report of the Education and Labor Committee on an Amendment intended to be proposed to the Sundry Civil Bill providing for an appropriation to aid in the establishment of a School in Utah ... with a view to the suppression of polygamy therein, S. Rept. 1279, 49th Cong., 1st sess., May 7, 1886, pp. 10-11.

* Courtesy of Special Collections, Utah State University Library.

believed it to be an incomplete measure. The Mormon Church not only continued to perform and sanction plural marriages, but fear of the priesthood's "system of espionage" and terrible reprisals prevented unhappy wives from breaking away. In August 1886 Congress appropriated \$40,000 for the home. Probably there was some feeling in Congress that such a home would expedite the process of bringing Utah socially into line with the rest of the country and as such would be a worthwhile project. However, it is interesting that Mrs. Newman's original testimony was steeped almost exclusively in the imagery of the oppressed and victimized plural wives. She apparently believed that their condition in and of itself, removed from all other issues at hand, was ample and potent justification to merit federal expenditure. If she had other motives, she chose to hide them behind this altruistic and sympathetic guise.

The fate of the Industrial Christian Home in Utah is an apt illustration of the image coming face-to-face with the realities of the Mormon women's situation and attitudes. The home opened for occupancy in Salt Lake City in November 1886, but very few individuals availed themselves of the home's services. By late 1888, the building housed eleven needy unfortunates, four of them women and seven men.³⁴ The annual reports of the home do not indicate whether or not these few inmates were Mormons or refugees from polygamy. Whatever their circumstances were, the women of Mormonism remained loyal to their church and

³⁴U. S., Congress, Senate, Report of the Utah Commission as to the Management of the Industrial Christian Home of Utah Territory, Sen. Misc. Doc. 34, 51st Cong., 1st sess., 1889, p. 2.

community and preferred their present domestic situations. It seems evident that the Mormons did not appreciate this intrusion in their social affairs. Dr. Ellen Ferguson was moved to write an indignant letter to the Washington Evening Star protesting the waste of public funds:

It is high time that the practice of begging for the "Mormons" should cease, and the benevolent and charitable people in the Eastern States be no longer imposed upon by such flimsy and unreliable stories as those that are the stock in trade of these professional beggars and clap-trap lecturers.³⁵

The federal government was soon inclined to agree, discontinuing its subsidies to the home in 1893.

The essential development of the "in the toils" image during the 1880's was its proliferation and its linkage with a political and reform movement. The image of the oppressed plural wives was not the only factor which motivated the legislative measures against the Mormons; these not only punished polygamy but forced an end to many of the business and political practices of the Church of Latter-day Saints. But "in the toils" did highlight the major Gentile contention against the Mormons, that their practices ran against the grain of conventional American norms and principles. "In the toils" was in part used to draw attention to the Mormons; it was spectacular and sensational, in a way which such conflicts as "church versus state" were not. Polygamy was able to create concern because of the things it was made to stand for--the abuse of women, uncontrolled licentiousness, disruption of the home, and ill effects

³⁵ Reprinted in U. S., Congress, House, Representative Isaac Struble speaking on aid to the Industrial Christian Home Association of Utah, H. Res. 10896, 50th Cong., 1st sess., October 4, 1888, Congressional Record, XIX, pt. 10, 563.

upon children. The Mormon woman could not acquire a new public image until polygamy, her much-discussed distinguishing feature, was put to an end.

Conclusion. One apparent conclusion derived from this discussion of the image's change and development was that once a stigma became attached to the Mormon women through emphasis on polygamy, it resisted change. The basic attitudes toward the Mormon women emerged quickly and were translated into representations which persisted in written and verbal sources throughout the entire period. All the representations in various ways said the same thing--that plural marriage was an evil and was particularly harmful in its effects upon women. As time passed, the "in the toils" image changed by elaboration, by its appearance in different types of sources, and by association with changing concerns and developments of the larger American society--but the central idea behind the image did not change. The later decades, the 1870's and 1880's, were marked by a firming up of programs to eradicate the practice, at which time the image was put to direct use.

It has not been within the scope of this study to examine the literature related to Mormon women appearing after the Woodruff Manifesto of 1890. However, it may be said that "in the toils" did not disappear immediately with the end of plural marriage. The tyrannized Mormon woman continued to be a popular symbol in novels well into the twentieth century, even though it was no longer common in serious accounts

or periodicals.³⁶ Vestiges of the image remained and may still remain. A one-time sensational idea dies hard, although the source of the idea as a historical reality or as a social issue may pass.

Once plural marriage ceased to be taught and endorsed by the Mormon Church, and the Mormons were made to repent their heinous deeds, Gentiles had no particular cause to moralize any longer. Some genuine interest began to develop toward what the practice had actually been like for the women, and some observers began to see the practice from new perspectives. Sarah Comstock, a sojourner in southern Utah in 1909, was far enough removed from the earlier emotionalizing to write,

I wondered if the Mormon woman's "tragedy" were not about the same as everybody's else tragedy--all a matter of how you take it. The practical little lady will find polygamy convenient, and the lugubrious one will find it dreary, and the petty one will find it annoying, and the spiritual one will find it exalting. But back of all these temperamental differences is the belief among all the old-school Latter-Day Saints and many of the younger ones that it is right; and that unswerving belief has made polygamy possible to these women.³⁷

After the controversy had passed, then, some Gentiles seemed more willing to accept the Mormon image of "onward for Zion" as an explanation for the sisters' adherence to polygamy in the nineteenth century. They had accepted it because it was "right" for them religiously, whatever they felt personally or whatever proved to be its social benefits or drawbacks. Earlier non-Mormons only saw and described how it was "wrong" for the women, and this had served as the mainspring of "in the toils" for many writers for many years.

³⁶ Probably the two classic literary works of this type on the Mormons popular after the Manifesto were Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes story, A Study in Scarlet (London, 1887; reprinted many times) and Zane Grey's Riders of the Purple Sage (New York, 1913).

³⁷ Sarah Comstock, "The Mormon Woman," Collier's, 44 (October 2, 1909), 17.

CONCLUSION

In its broadest implications, this study might serve as a demonstration of the impact of ideas in history. Ideas, given tangible and explicit form through the vehicle of image, often have a more vital force in historical events than realistic circumstances and situations.

This generalization may be applied in several ways to the common image of the Mormon woman between 1852 and 1890. Popular literature, periodicals, reformist literature, and other types of media all contributed to the construction of "in the toils" and as such influenced public opinion toward the Mormons and toward polygamy. Much of the nineteenth century writing on the Mormons was less informative and more opinionated and subjective in character. In part the controversy over the Mormons was due to the failure of journalists and commentators to supply accurate and detached information.

While writings on the Mormons served to create and shape public opinion, they also reflected current sentiments and biases. The Gentiles' insistence on the Mormon woman's degraded position indicates an ethnocentric intolerance toward the different and the unusual. Before anyone had actually seen plural marriage in operation, it was branded an evil. There was little inclination to accept it as merely a social quirk. Nor did writings on Mormon women show much appreciation for their acceptance of plural marriage as it was important and meaningful to them. Disagreement over values and practices between individuals and groups is not necessarily harmful; it is inevitable. Disagreements are

only constructively resolved through recognition of other perspectives. The perpetuation of "in the toils" certainly did not lead in the direction of a greater understanding or sensitivity among Gentiles of some of the actual problems and rewards of Mormon womanhood.

Editorializing in 1886 on the progress of the Edmunds Act, the London Saturday Review aptly summarized what has been a central theme of this study. Wrote the Review, "the operation of the Bill for suppressing Mormonism will be watched with a certain amount of curiosity; but the illustration of American ways of thinking is more interesting than the fortunes of a small and isolated sect."¹ The American reaction to Mormon polygamy is very telling as it demonstrates efforts to reinforce ideals regarding womanhood, the home, and family life. There was little margin for deviation from the desired norms, and it appears that these norms were relatively insecure and unstable since the self-contained and principled practice of Mormon polygamy loomed as a major social threat. The British have always been intrigued by the American experiment in democracy and were no less so at the American attempt to democratize woman's place in the hinterlands of Utah. One might well suspect that the British, observing from a distance, had their own image of the American republic and its response to polygamy. They saw a modern Procrustus, spouting pious platitudes, attempting to squeeze the wayward Mormons into the standard monogamous bed.

But the study of the "in the toils" image is part of the history of both groups, the Mormon as well as the larger American culture. Even in the far reaches of the nineteenth century West, the Mormons and

¹"Mormonism," Saturday Review (London), LXI (January 23, 1886), 103.

their historical development were not self-contained. A study of image is an attempt to more fully understand the external influences which functioned in Mormon history and society. As discussed throughout this study, attitudes toward the Mormons frequently evolved through events and ideas which had little or nothing to do with the Mormons themselves. A thorough analysis of how views toward the Mormons corresponded to the larger intellectual framework of the period would be an important undertaking; such would shed new light on the political programs and social reforms imposed upon the Mormons. This study has explored only one facet of this subject, that related to values concerning womanhood. In this area, the non-Mormon image of womanly Zion made an impact on the Mormon sisters themselves. Within Utah, the women of the church responded and tried to make themselves known as moving "onward for Zion." Thus an idea, that concerning their oppression, penetrated their consciousness and caused a counter-reaction as described in Chapter IV.

The truth of the Mormon woman's situation in the nineteenth century lies somewhere between their own published and public avowals of "onward for Zion" and the Gentile view of their oppression and degradation. It is doubtful that all plural wives felt the all-out, unstinting personal attachment to plural marriage they publicly expressed, yet neither did they find themselves unqualifiably misused. Circumscribed by image, the reality occupies a middle ground; this study has attempted to set some parameters and suggest some approximations of the true character of the lives of Mormon women.

The study of image deals with a special kind of reality. While "in the toils" itself was false as a representation of the women, the

beliefs which produced the image were real and significant. Not the least of the components of "in the toils" were such elements as fear of the strange and unknown, customary attachment to monogamy, and ideals of how women should be treated. Such abstract attachments, psychologically and ideologically rooted, are no less real than specific historical events as they influence historical movements and activities. And to those writers who developed the fantastic scenes of the Mormon woman's bondage---their whippings, their suicides, their mutant children, their attempted escapes in the midst of swirling snowstorms, Brigham Young being borne across the plains in a litter hefted by fifty sweating wives---it only needs to be said that the human capacity for imagination and wonder has always been one of the most irrepressible and compelling forces in history.

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